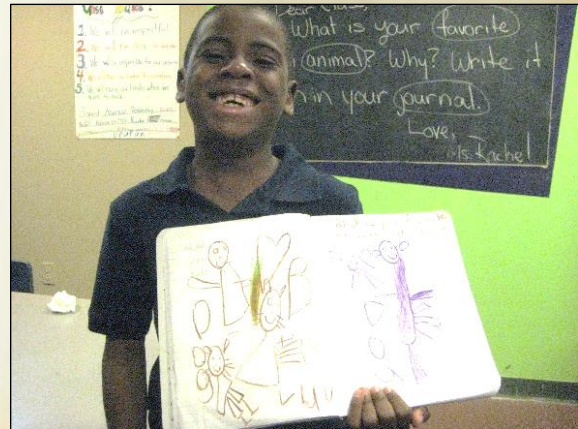


# Neverending Stories

It's a bit surprising—albeit very refreshing—to hear Jordan Matthews, a 16-year old sophomore at City Neighbors High School, reflect so nostalgically on his experiences as an elementary and middle school student in LINK programs. It is not a common tendency of teenagers to feel patient about the future or convey gratitude for the past. Jordan, a longtime participant in the Village Learning Place's youth education initiative Let's Invest in Neighborhood Kids (LINK), said if he could go back and do it all over again, he would. His appreciation becomes more understandable as he continues to share. Jordan said his time in LINK programs provided him with fond memories to look

back upon and a clearer picture of his future goals. The latter is why he expresses just as much enthusiasm about where he plans to go as he does about where he has already been.

Jordan began attending LINK After School as a 1<sup>st</sup> grader in 2009. As the middle of 5 boys, all of whom attended or still attend LINK youth programs, Jordan said his mom signed him up as soon as he was old enough to go. He remembers practicing his alphabet and learning how to write more neatly during his early years in the program.





As he advanced through LINK After School, Jordan discovered he loved engineering challenges and group projects. His favorite was building cars from sticks and marshmallows and racing them down the hallway in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. His most vivid memories from the LINK Summer program are of the weekly field trips, especially the annual trip to Rocky Point beach because he loves to swim. Now a participant in LINK Leaders, the program for 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> grade

students, Jordan is honing his entrepreneurial skills. He said he gains valuable business knowledge every year, about everything from finances to networking, that will help him achieve his goal of opening his own clothing design store.

It's clear Jordan is preparing for life after graduation, but he's not rushed. He's happy to have more time in LINK Leaders to further develop his business instincts and to continue building friendships with his classmates.

