



Diondre T. Jackson

Over the last 20 years, Diondre Jackson and his wife have loved working with kids, especially young men. When he realized that young men in Knoxville's inner-city high schools were failing, breaking the law and headed in the wrong direction, he decided to do something to help, what many called "throw away kids". Diondre's goal was to help young men transition from high school to life as an independent adult. As a former high jump athlete at the University of Tennessee, Diondre lettered 1996 to 1999 and led as track & field captain and created the perfect name for the new organization. He called his program "***Penultimate Development***", which is synonymous to the transitional step that high jumpers take before launching themselves into the air. According to Diondre, it is the most important step in high jump competition. A lot of people think it's the take-off is the most important step, but it's the Penultimate step, the second to last step that is critically important, Jackson said. "The lower you go without bending over, the higher you're going to jump. So, it's the second to last thing they do before they soar." The Penultimate Development program is aimed at being that transitional step young men need to soar as adults.

To implement his vision of providing a safe haven for teens to have a second chance to reorder their lives, Diondre and his wife purchased an old building in downtown Jefferson City and spent months performing all the restoration work needed to transform it into "***Penult Place***" a 3,900 sq. ft. residential living quarters for the men in the program and co-workspace located in downtown Jefferson City. The Penult Leadership program targets young men, primarily African-Americans, between the ages of 18 and 24 from single parent low income homes in disadvantaged communities in Knox County. And, in August 2019 the first group of 6- young men from inner-city communities began a 10-month program residing together at the Penult Place in downtown Jefferson City. The young men share household responsibilities, attend full-time jobs, participate in Bible studies and undergo leadership and professional development training. "The change we want to see in our inner cities, in our low-income communities, has to come from within. That's why I'm focusing my efforts on giving them the tools they need to be leaders who first change their lives, then change their community," Diondre emphasized. The inaugural student group achieved much success after completing the 10-program and Diondre is currently working with the second cohort of Knoxville inner-city students experiencing The Penultimate Development. If you desire to learn more about this dynamic program, please visit their website: penultplace.com.

Diondre Jackson earned both a master's degree in business administration and a bachelor's degree in Urban Studies from Carson Newman University and the University of Tennessee, respectively. His personal and academic success later propelled him into the role of CEO at Williams Creek Youth Foundation where he worked for twelve years. During his time with the Williams Creek Youth Foundation, Jackson oversaw First Tee of Greater Knoxville, Williams Creek Golf Course, and the Wee Course Academic Work Center. He currently serves on the Mossy Creek Foundation Board, Tennova Jefferson Memorial Board, the East Tennessee Foundation and Thrive. Jackson has also received several awards and accolades for his outstanding commitment to community service and leadership. In 2008, he was recognized as one of the "***Forty under Forty***" leaders to watch in the *Greater Knoxville Business Journal*. In 2011, he was a member of Leadership Knoxville and was presented the 100 Black Men of Knoxville's community service award two years later. Jackson also graduated from the Consortium for Social Enterprise Effectiveness in 2016 and was again awarded for his work in community service at the MLK Chairs Awards ceremony that year as well. He has also been a guest on Hallerin Hilton Hill's well-known television program *Anything is Possible*. Diondre Jackson and his wife, Adia, have three children together. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with them and his family as well as coaching basketball and track, golfing, fishing, hunting, skiing, and carpentry. The Beta Theta Boulè Foundation is honored to present the **2022 Fatherhood Excellence Award** to Diondre T. Jackson.