



Lucy Johnson // all photos

The will to persevere

Two brothers spend hours traveling to and from school for a better education

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Jahmar Coakley is a freshman at Wando. Unassuming and maybe a little bit unmotivated -- at first impression, Jahmar seems almost shy.

No one would make any assumptions about him, no one would judge him or think badly of him.

But nonetheless, every time he gets ready to leave for school in the morning, and every time he packs up to go home -- Jahmar dreads one question from his peers.

"How do you get home?" When he gets this question he answers quickly, nervously.

"Oh my mom comes and picks me up."

But then when they ask, "Well why are you walking to the head of the road?" he has no answer.

Junior Jahmar Coakley reflects on his freshman self, wondering at his embarrassment over riding the bus. Riding on a few buses, just to get home.

"Freshman year -- because we're not the richest people -- I felt like, I don't know, I just felt like people would see me catch the bus and they would look at me differently and make fun of me," Jahmar said.

Jahmar and his brother, senior Jabrill, wake up at five in the morning almost every day.

Then, they ride with their mother to her work at a bus lot.

Jabrill waits for his father to pick him up and Jahmar waits for his girlfriend.

From there they drive an hour to Wando.

They go about their normal school day.

On the days they aren't with their grandma, after school, Jabrill -- sometimes Jahmar, if he doesn't have work -- walks to the new building and waits there until about 4:20.

Then he walks to the Carta bus stop on the side of Highway 17 and waits for the bus to get there around 4:45.

He takes the bus to Towne Center and waits for the next one.

Then, he gets on that bus and rides downtown.

Waits again. Waits for another bus to take him to the Citadel Mall.

Then, his mom picks him up.

He's home around seven.

And when asked if he gets frustrated and angry at this rigorous schedule, Jabrill's only reply is, "I don't really care. As long as I get home."

The two boys have a capacity for patience and know not to take things for granted.

"My parents did teach us we had to work for everything we get, so I guess working for something instead of just having it handed to you, forces you to appreciate the little things in life," Jahmar explained.

The little things.

Getting to school every day.

Receiving a good education.

Learning valuable lessons for the future.

Jabrill has been taking Culinary classes at Wando. He said the teachers and the environ-

ment has sculpted his own plans for the future.

"The people - teachers - [in Culinary class] help me, and when I go to Culinary Arts, I like to cook and the food that we learned," Jabrill said. "I was thinking about becoming a veterinarian but I might just be a chef. I might go into the military and be a chef for the military. And then leave and build my own restaurant."

For Jahmar, it was Theatre in his freshman year that not only continues to inspire his ideas for the future, but also changed his mindset entirely about what it is to be appreciative.

"I was confused about a lot of things in life and theatre was that outlet. It satisfied my need to express how I felt about certain situations without taking it out on the wrong people," he said. "It initially made me a more positive person. I turned into that kid that walks into a room, senses a tense vibe and says something crazy just to lighten the mood."

Theatre allowed him to get out of his comfort zone and be whoever he wanted to be, at

least while he was standing on stage. It was also where he met his first friends.

His friends are his motivation.

"I don't like to compare my problems to other people's because maybe somebody has like a rich daddy, maybe their worst problem is breaking a nail but I feel like everybody experiences things differently," Jahmar said.

When you wake up at five in the morning and get to school at eight.

And you're out of school at 3:45 and get home at seven.

You have a 14-hour day.

And then you can still walk into school every day with a smile.

That is when you know, realistically -- there is not much left you can't do.

"I just felt like, just because I lived in an area with a 'Not good enough' school, I still have a duty to be the best I can be and I feel like Wando is where I can be the best me," Jahmar said.



Junior Jahmar Coakley waits on a bench just outside the Center for Advanced Studies for the CARTA bus at 4:20 p.m on Oct. 13. He often relies on the CARTA bus for transportation to and from school.