

Heading in the right direction

Each year Lakewood staff recognizes students who have made a dramatic turnaround since their freshman year, in both academics and behavior. This year's staff voted for Marquaveon Martin, below, as the school's No. 1 success story. Other standout students were also recognized for their achievements.



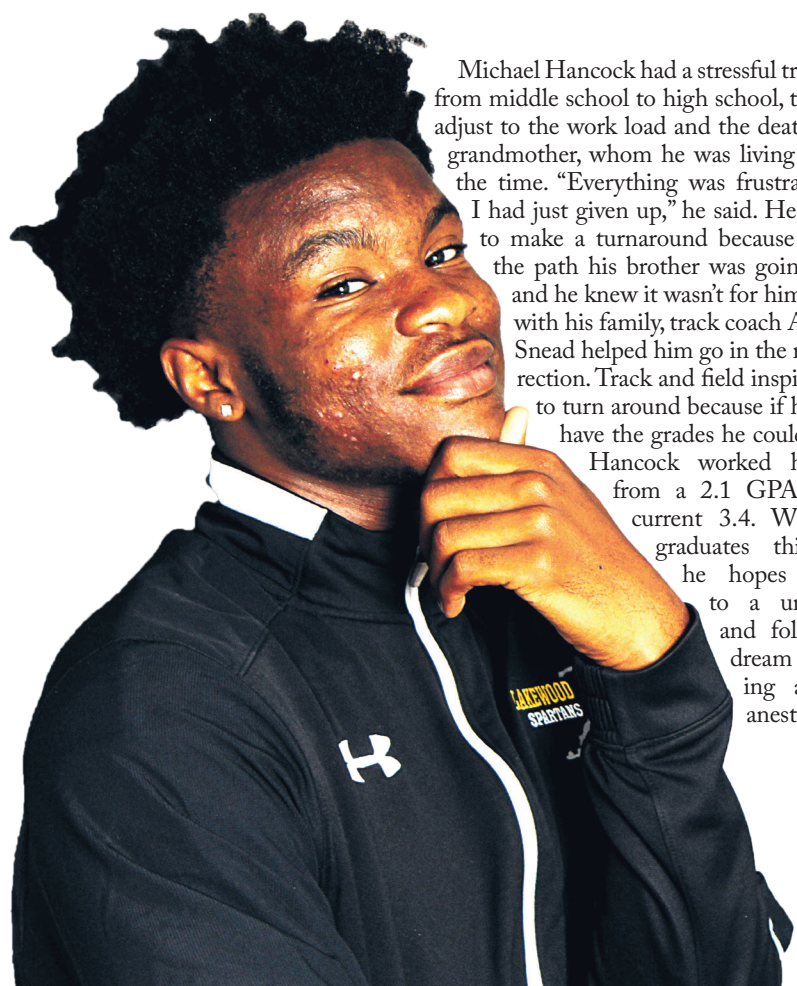
Kijara Ellis said she was a mean girl in ninth grade. She racked up 12 referrals and had a GPA of 2.5. "I turned around because I got tired of being that girl, the bad one," Ellis said. She realized that if she was "acting a fool all the time," that there would be no way that she could accomplish her goals. "Think about your future and consider it before you go and do bad stuff," she said. Ellis currently has a 2.7 GPA and has received no referrals this school year. Ellis wants to attend Barry University to study nursing and one day become a pediatric nurse.

Kijara Ellis
2.5 GPA to 2.7 GPA



Corrionna Small said that in ninth grade, she wasn't doing anything and wasn't going to class. "School wasn't hard. I just was tripping," she said. She credits VE specialist Emily Cipolla for inspiring her to turn around because she made her realize that all her friends and classmates would graduate and she would be at Lakewood by herself. When she decided to do her 180 turnaround, her grandmother who she lives with was thrilled. Small went from a 0.8 GPA to a 2.3. After graduation, she plans to go to the Air Force or attend Pinellas Technical College to be a medical technician.

Corrionna Small
0.8 GPA to 2.3 GPA



Michael Hancock
2.1 GPA to 3.4 GPA

Michael Hancock had a stressful transition from middle school to high school, trying to adjust to the work load and the death of his grandmother, whom he was living with at the time. "Everything was frustrating, so I had just given up," he said. He wanted to make a turnaround because he saw the path his brother was going down and he knew it wasn't for him. Along with his family, track coach Anthony Sneed helped him go in the right direction. Track and field inspired him to turn around because if he didn't have the grades he couldn't run. Hancock worked his way from a 2.1 GPA to his current 3.4. When he graduates this year, he hopes to go to a university and follow his dream of being a nurse anesthetist.

By NASSIR COATES AND TORRY JONES
SNN Staff Writers

When senior Marquaveon Martin was in ninth grade, he was attending Gibbs High School and was on the road to failure.

"I was getting in trouble and kicked out of class and my GPA was low. I wasn't on ... track to graduate," he said.

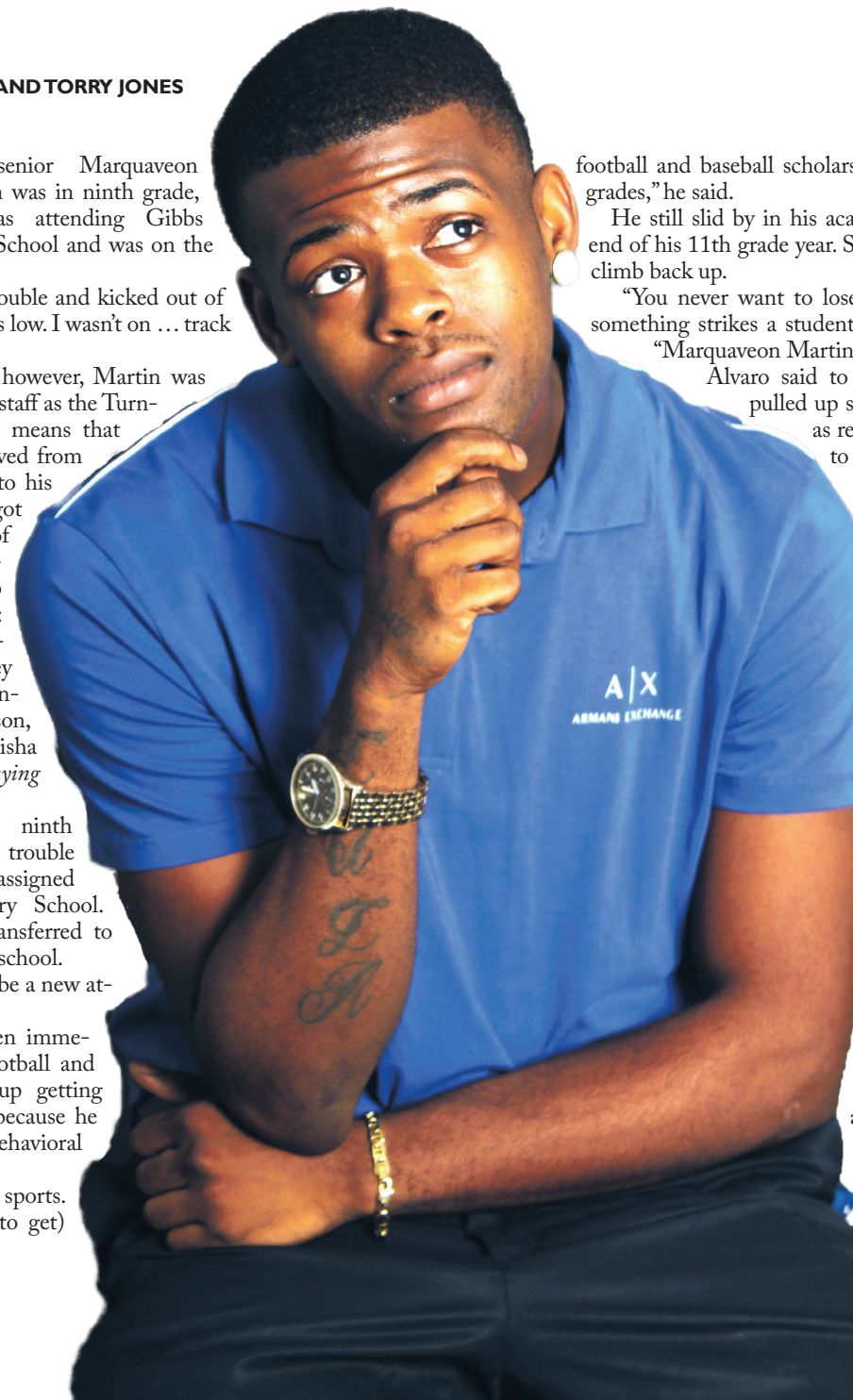
In his senior year, however, Martin was voted by teachers and staff as the Turnaround Student. This means that he is the most improved from his ninth-grade year to his 12th grade year. He got the most votes out of a total of eight students. The runners-up behind Martin were: Corrionna Small, Jalen Rogers, Brittney Jackson, Michael Hancock, Kijara Ellis and Johnisha Parham. (see accompanying stories)

During Martin's ninth grade year, he got in trouble at Gibbs and was reassigned to Pinellas Secondary School. In 10th grade, he transferred to Lakewood, his zoned school.

"I felt like it would be a new atmosphere," he said.

But it didn't happen immediately. He played football and baseball but ended up getting kicked off the team because he had bad grades and behavioral referrals.

"I couldn't play ... sports. I had (the potential to get)



football and baseball scholarships but I couldn't play because of my grades," he said.

He still slid by in his academics, but began to get serious at the end of his 11th grade year. Since then, his grades and GPA began to climb back up.

"You never want to lose faith in a student because sometimes something strikes a student," assistant principal Susan Alvaro said. "Marquaveon Martin is an amazing student."

Alvaro said to choose the Turnaround Student, they pulled up students' GPAs from 9th to 12th as well as referrals and sent out an email to teachers to vote.

Martin, whose GPA in ninth grade was 1.7, had to do a lot of makeup work and studying. By his senior year, he had brought it up to 2.7.

"You got to stay consistent; yeah, I'm proud of myself. It's a big accomplishment," Martin said.

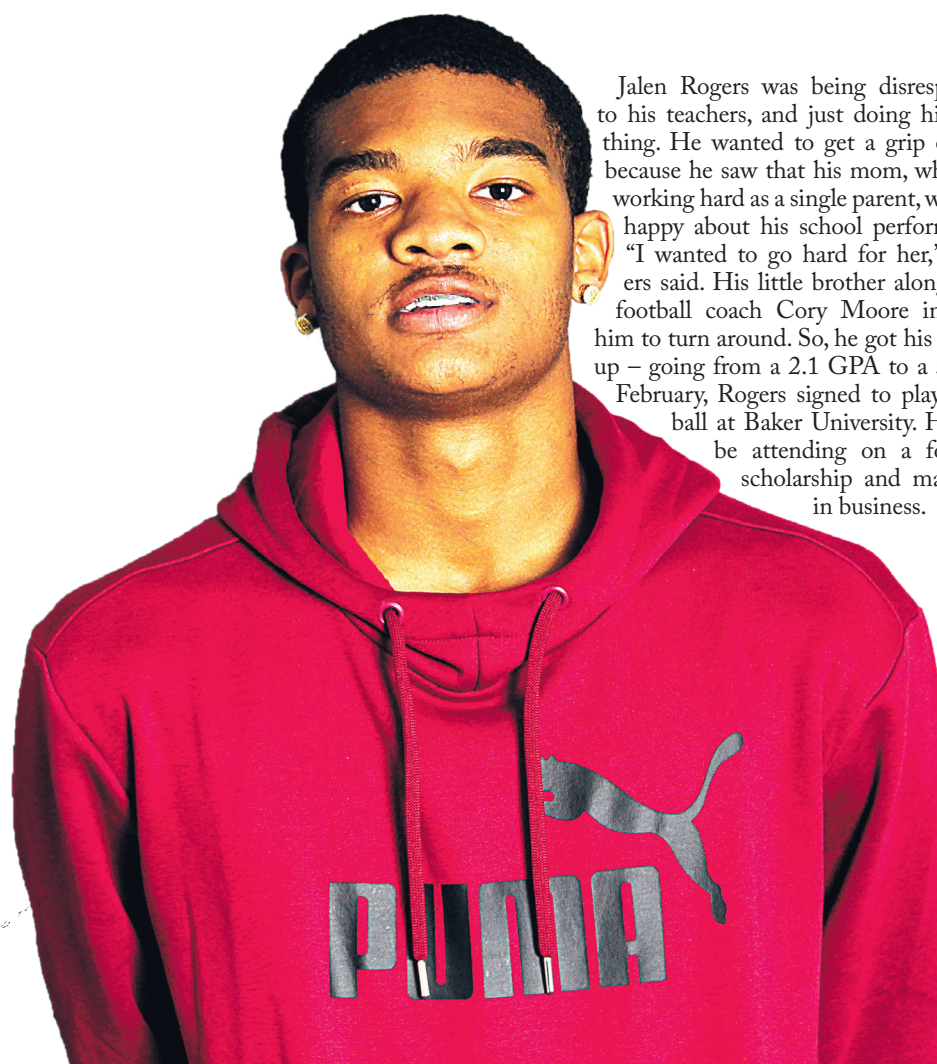
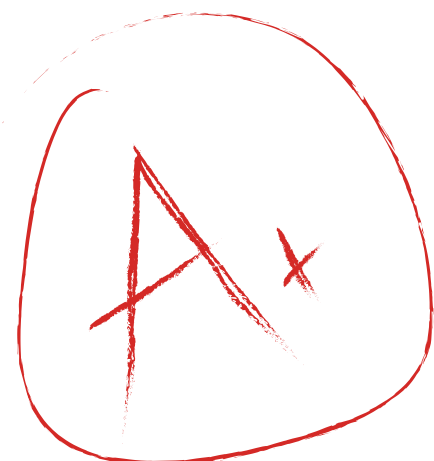
"He has good grades. In the past he didn't care, but now he cares about his grades. If he wants he can be a helper to other students," social studies teacher Christopher King said. "He is a good student and that's why I voted for him for this award. I think that's great that he won and that he totally deserves this award."

Martin, a member of 5,000 Role Models, has advice to ninth-grade students: "Don't mess up in your ninth-grade year."

He set goals after turning himself around academically and behaviorally.

"I want to join the Army," Martin said. "It's something I wanted to do for a long time. I know I can make a career out of it."

Marquaveon Martin
1.7 GPA to 2.7 GPA



Jalen Rogers was being disrespectful to his teachers, and just doing his own thing. He wanted to get a grip on life because he saw that his mom, who was working hard as a single parent, was unhappy about his school performance. "I wanted to go hard for her," Rogers said. His little brother along with football coach Cory Moore inspired him to turn around. So, he got his grades up - going from a 2.1 GPA to a 3.0. In February, Rogers signed to play football at Baker University. He will be attending on a football scholarship and majoring in business.

Jalen Rogers
2.1 GPA to 3.0 GPA

Brittney Jackson used to come to school just to have fun. The classwork wasn't hard. She just didn't want to do work and didn't care about doing it. Her sophomore year she realized she was slacking and that if she didn't turnaround now she would have to do all the classes over. VE specialist Emily Cipolla played a huge role in helping her turn around. "She told me I needed to start focusing on myself," Jackson said. Her parents and her auntie, who passed away, also inspired her to change. She wanted to turn around when she realized colleges would check her grades. She really started buckling down in her junior year and now her GPA, which was 1.8 in ninth grade, is 3.0. Jackson is awaiting an acceptance letter from Florida A&M University for the 2018-2019 school year.



Brittney Jackson
1.8 GPA to 3.0 GPA



Dalon Wilson had a rough start because he wasn't worried about his grades - he was more worried about females. When he finished his ninth-grade year, he had a 1.5 GPA. "My priorities weren't right," Wilson said. He wasn't struggling with understanding the work - he just wasn't coming to school to get the work. Wilson said he wanted to make a change because he realized he wasn't going to go far with the grades he had and he wanted to get out of St. Petersburg. Now his GPA is 2.3 and he plans to go to Bethune Cookman University and be a walk-on for football.

Dalon Wilson
1.3 GPA to 2.3 GPA

Johnisha Parham
1.9 GPA to 2.5 GPA



Johnisha Parham used to come to school in ninth grade and skip in the bathroom all day. Parham had a 1.9 GPA and was not on track to graduate. She soon realized, however, that she had to make a change. "I wanted to better myself and I had to realize that I wanted to go far in life," she said. Her mom and her friends help her strive every day. Parham currently has a 2.5 GPA and will graduate in May. Her advice is to never give up. "Stay on track, stay focused, don't let anything distract you."