

Craig Blackburn
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OBJECTIVES:

To be the best that I can be and a contributor to my community and society. Success is not measured by competing with others, but by each individual living life to their greatest potential. I live and believe that success comes in trying and that everyone has something to contribute.

EDUCATION HISTORY:

- I began school at the age of 3 months at the ARC of New Orleans.
- I entered the public school system at age 3 in the Special Ed Program in St. Charles Parish (Louisiana).
- At age 8, I entered a regular academic curriculum and started working toward a regular high school diploma meeting all the requirements of the State of Louisiana. I was in a program called Rights Without Labels.
- In May of 2000, I graduated from Hahnville High School with my fellow classmates receiving a regular high school diploma. I met all requirements, never failed a class, nor did I have to repeat a grade.
- I earned a \$1000 scholarship from DynMcDermott Petroleum Operations to attend Nicholls State University.
- I attended Nicholls State University (NSU) for one semester.

SCHOOL ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ROTC for the 4 years of high school
- Played the saxophone in the band at Landry Middle School and Hahnville High School (HHS)
- Manager of the football team in middle school and in high school earning my letter jacket as a senior
- Received academic awards for math and was on the honor roll
- At 15, I was selected by the Louisiana American Legion Auxiliary as the outstanding middle school Special Education student. I was cited for my academic performance in a totally inclusive education program
- Selected twice, as a Cox Cable Inspirational Student Hero
- As a senior I was voted by my classmates as the Male with the Most Spirit

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WORK EXPERIENCE:

- Server at snow ball and ice cream stand (Simpli Sno) for two years (1995-1997)
- Worked at McDonald's for two years (1997-1999)
- Worked, part-time, as in food preparation at Velvet Espresso until they closed (2012-2014)
- Worked as a courtesy clerk for Winn Dixie for over eighteen years (1999-2017)
- Began my career with the New Orleans Pelicans (NBA) as a member of the equipment team (September 2017 – current)
- Volunteer at East Jefferson General Hospital in the kitchen executing food preparation (February 2019 – current)

CAREER:

- Motivational speaker since 2004. Travel independently throughout the United States delivering the messages of inclusion, ability and full participation in life for all individuals. In 2009, delivered my first international speaking message in the Middle East in Doha, Qatar.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Was an altar server at St. Anthony's church and received an award as an outstanding altar server
- 1st degree black belt in karate
- At 14, I was selected as a foreign exchange student to Italy and I had an audience with Pope John Paul II
- I participated in the 1995 Olympic Torch Run in St Charles Parish during its passing through Louisiana
- Athlete for Special Olympics in: swimming, bowling, basketball, and bocce
- Volunteer swim coach for JoJo's Hope, an organization to teach individuals with Special Needs to swim (past)
- 4th Degree in the Knights of Columbus
- Member of Special Rollers Bowling league
- Member of Pinnacles Social group of Jefferson Parish, Louisiana
- Member of Cortez Social group

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SELF ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- In 1998, I was selected to participate in the President's Council on Mental Retardation Symposium in Washington, DC as a Self-Advocate
- In April 2003, I was elected to the Board of the Down Syndrome Association of Greater New Orleans (DSAGNO) as Self Advocate Chair (active)
- Since July 2003, I have attended the National Down Syndrome Society or the National Down Syndrome Congress conferences held throughout the US annually and have presented Youth and Self Advocate workshops
- Graduate of Partners in Policymaking where my final project and goal was to become a motivational speaker, which I have accomplished
- Member of Louisiana State Improvement Grant (LASIG) (past)
- Director for Special Needs – Tulane Chapter for Best Buddies of Louisiana (past)
- Board of Directors for Best Buddies of Louisiana (past)
- Board of Directors for Families Helping Families of Jefferson Parish (past)
- Board of Directors for People First of Louisiana (past)
- DSAGNO Buddy Walk committee member for over ten years
- Participated in the Buddy Walk on Washington since 2003 meeting with legislators to advocate on significant issues for individuals with special needs with the latest effort occurring in April 2015
- Joshua O'Neill/Tabani scholarship from NDSS in 2011
- Approved (May 2015) by the Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) and the Governor of Louisiana as a Self-Advocacy Board Member (active)
- Special Olympics Leadership Council (June 2017)
- One of twenty-five US recipients of the ABC Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly (ESPY) award for Special Olympics (July 2017)

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MAJOR MILESTONES:

- In 2007, I became engaged to my girlfriend, Heather Hancock
- In 2010, I purchased my own home (condo) through the program, “A Home of My Own” and now live independently achieving a goal I have worked toward
- NDSS Self Advocate of the Year – Champion of Change – Buddy Walk on Washington, DC - 2012
- May 2012, named the Soul Knows No Bounds Ambassador to serve on the Buddy Cruise in October 2012
- September 2012, completed and earned certification for 100 hours of Hands On Education culinary training in food preparation at the Hyatt Hotel in Clearwater Beach, FL
- Met with legislators for many years (8 years and 4 Congresses) to successfully advocate for the passage of the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act which was signed into law by President Obama in December 2014
- 2014 King of the Pinnacles Social Group in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana
- 2015 Captain of the Pinnacles Social Group in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana
- 2018 Captain of Cortez Caravan Social Group in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana