

## Vincent Derek Smith Nomination Essay

Vincent Derek Smith is a powerful force for unity, hope, and change in Lancaster. Through his work with the African American Cultural Alliance of Lancaster (AACAL) and his youth mentorship program, The Infamous Unstoppables Drill Team & Drum Squad, Derek has spent years creating space, visibility, and opportunity for the African American community—especially its youth. As the founder of AACAL, Derek has become a cultural leader and connector — someone who brings people together through meaningful events, advocacy, and outreach. His focus is not just on honoring the past, but on building a stronger, more inclusive future. That vision extended to the political arena just last May, when Derek ran for Lancaster City Council. With a grassroots campaign rooted in service and equity, he earned widespread support and came remarkably close to securing a seat — a reflection of the deep trust and respect he's earned in the community. What truly sets Derek apart is his heart for mentorship. Through The Infamous Unstoppables, a youth drill team and drumline he coaches and leads, Derek offers young people not just a creative outlet, but a second family. His program teaches discipline, teamwork, cultural pride, and self-respect. He's a coach, a mentor, and often a stand-in father figure to kids who need guidance, structure, and love. Derek spends dozens of volunteer hours each month — often nights and weekends — planning practices, transporting youth, coordinating performances, and fundraising to keep the program running. Many of the youth he works with have overcome adversity, and Derek is there every step of the way, pushing them to be their best and reminding them that they are seen, heard, and valued. The impact of his work is immeasurable. His mentorship has kept kids off the streets, in school, and focused on something bigger than themselves. His advocacy through AACAL has brought awareness, visibility, and cultural healing to Lancaster. And perhaps most importantly, his presence has inspired a new generation to take pride in who they are and to give back to their community. Derek doesn't do any of this for recognition. He does it because it's who he is — a servant leader, a strong voice in the community, and a role model who believes that when you pour into others, your community rises with you. If selected as a top 8 honoree, I have no doubt Derek would choose to give the \$2,000 donation to a youth-centered cause that continues his mission of building brighter futures. Derek doesn't just care — he commits. He uplifts. He transforms lives. And our community is stronger because of him. It's an honor to nominate him for WGAL's 8 Who Care.