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# We Are G.A.M.E. Alum DJ Reed's NFL Career Demonstrates 'It Takes a Village'

- We Are G.A.M.E. Inc.
- 4 hrs ago

TORRANCE, Calif., Sept. 13, 2022 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) — Allen Thigpen, co-founder of We Are G.A.M.E., grew up in Plainfield, New Jersey rooting for the New York Jets, even back when they were the Titans. After graduating from Pennsylvania Military College (now Widener University), in Chester, Pennsylvania, Thigpen was commissioned as a second Lieutenant in the United States Army and served as an officer during the Vietnam era.

Fast forward to 2008, and Thigpen — still a Jets fan — founded We Are G.A.M.E. (Getting Athletes Mentoring and Education) with his wife Joyce. A few years later, the Thigpens received an email from Linda Reed, a single parent and cancer survivor in Bakersfield, California. She inquired if her son, DJ, could join the program while attending Independence High School.

The answer was yes. After mentoring DJ through high school, the Thigpens helped to set him up for success in college. Joyce attended Fresno State University's "Dog Days" orientation with DJ and Linda. At the time, it was unheard of for a student-athlete to arrive on campus with their own college counselor.

Ultimately, after some time attending Fresno State, DJ determined that it wasn't the right fit. The Thigpens jumped back in, helping him interview at four different community colleges. DJ chose Cerritos College, where Linda made the three-hour drive to attend every home game. At the same time, Blaze and Cheryl Bhence attended his home games and practices and took him out to dinner frequently. Meanwhile, Joyce developed an education plan, helping DJ get his Associate of Arts degree in just one year.

His performance at Cerritos landed him a football scholarship to Kansas State University, where Allen and Joyce, along with mentor Karen Rogers, regularly attended games. They also traveled to Phoenix to watch DJ and Elijah Walker play in the Cactus Bowl. At that game, DJ literally gave the shirt off his back and his cleats to kids in attendance so they wouldn't leave empty-handed.

After that bowl game, DJ declared for the NFL draft. The We Are G.A.M.E. family got to attend the draft party to hear his name called in the fifth round as he was picked up by the San Francisco 49ers.

The story doesn't end there, though. One day, Allen got a call that DJ had signed with the New York Jets. His football life had now come full circle. As the regular season starts this weekend, you can spot DJ wearing #4 for the Jets, his mentor's longtime team of choice.

About We Are G.A.M.E.:

We are G.A.M.E., Inc. is made up of a T.E.A.M. (Those Empowering Athletes by Mentoring) of community members strongly committed to empowering student-athletes with the tools and skills needed to successfully tackle the world of college athletics. The

T.E.A.M. serves a population of students in need of support, advice, and, most of all, life guidance.

By identifying student-athletes in the ninth grade or earlier, the nonprofit aims to positively influence their lives. The mentors at We Are G.A.M.E. want to see young athletes develop to their fullest athletic potential but ensure that the students also focus on education. The mentors work with students and their parents to create a game plan to pursue academic excellence as well as athletic success.

Learn more at <https://www.wearegame.org/>.

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