

PAL

GRADS TO BE PROUD OF



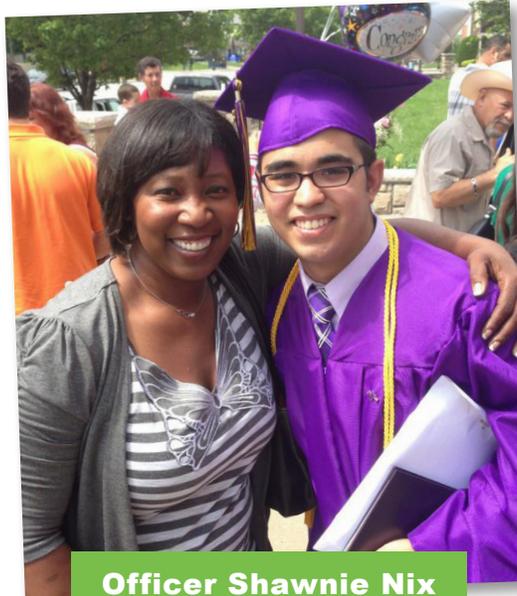
Will Medina became a PAL kid when he was starting the 7th grade. He had just moved to KC from Colorado Springs, CO with his mom and sister, and – as they explored their new neighborhood – they came across a big empty field just blocks away. They had no idea that field belonged to the Police Athletic League.

Along with his mom, uncles and a couple of their friends, Will decided to kick a soccer ball around on the field. Before long a PAL officer came out and invited Will and his family to not only join with some other PAL kids to play soccer but to explore other athletic activities going on inside.

As soon as Will walked into the facility and saw Officer Shawnie Nix leading a boxing session, he knew that boxing was for him. The chance to box excited him, but his mother was adamant that he was not going to participate in the sport.

They struck a deal: If Will really wanted to box, he had to come up with the money himself for the initial \$10 fee. So ... Will had an idea. He went to the nearby Dollar store and bought a box of eight chocolates for \$1. Then he walked around the neighborhood, selling the individual chocolates for \$.25 each. He repeated those steps until he eventually earned enough money to pay the initial \$10 fee, so his mother relented.

From then on – from seventh grade through his early years in high school – Will could be found at the boxing fa-



**Officer Shawnie Nix
with Will Medina**

cility almost every day after school, sparring with his PAL friends under the guidance of Officer Nix. He rarely missed. When you ask Will today about his time spent boxing at PAL, he is adamant that it kept him out of trouble.

Eventually Will went beyond boxing and got involved with other PAL programs, too. He talks today about how valuable the PAL

Leadership Development Programs were, including one program that culminated in a trip to New Orleans. That New Orleans trip – led by Officer Nix and Officer Clint Crumm – included the first chance for Will and other kids to see the ocean, which was an eye-opening experience.

Finding a second mom in “Coach” Nix

Over the course of his time at PAL, Officer Nix became like a second mom to Will. In fact, even now – at 26 years of age and eight years past high school graduation – Will stays in frequent touch with the woman he still calls “Coach.” According to Will, “Not only did Coach support me the whole time I attended PAL, when I headed to Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, it was Coach who organized a donation drive to supply me with all of my dorm room supplies. And when I graduated from Benedictine, Coach came to my college graduation.”

Will can’t say enough good things about Officer Nix and the valuable role she played in his life. And she is likewise a big fan of Will’s. Officer Nix said of Will “He was deter-



Will Medina: An exciting start to his career

Although Will always had the support of his mom and sister, his father was not a part of his life ... his dad has been serving a long sentence in prison since Will was nine years old. So, the officers at PAL – in particular Officer Nix – played an important role in Will's life. And they are proud of how he has matured into a successful young adult.

While in high school at Cristo Rey Kansas City – where he participated in a valuable work-study program – he gravitated to music. As time allowed, he began playing with a Latin band that performed at shows and weddings. His growing interest in music and his commitment to getting good grades left little time for boxing during his later years in high school, but Will had recognized that music offered him more career opportunities than boxing could, so he embraced it and decided to pursue music in college.

Shortly after graduating from Benedictine College with a major in Music Education, Will attended a job fair at the University of Kansas where he learned about an opportunity to teach music to students in rural Alaska. After talking through the opportunity with both his mom and Officer Nix, he accepted what turned into an amazing adventure.

Will moved to Alaska in 2018 and settled into an apartment in Kotzebue, then traveled by bush plane each week – in 14-week rotations – to different rural communities, teaching music to students of all ages and musical capabilities. According to Will, "Sometimes the planes would have nine or 10 other folks, but at times it was just the pilot and me, along with cargo that might include mail or food for the local grocery store. And my accommodations for the week would vary. Some schools had a small 'teacher's room' where I could stay, but in other schools I would sleep for a week on a couch or an inflatable bed. The accommodations varied widely, but, overall, I had an amazing experience!"

After nearly four years of teaching in Alaska – experiencing parts of the state that few visitors have ever seen – Will is now onto a new adventure. He recently moved to Salt Lake City and is in the process of exploring new career opportunities that would give him the chance to mentor youth who have experienced tough life situations. Armed with the skills he gained from his time at the PAL Center, followed by his unique experience in Alaska, Will clearly has much to offer other young people, and will excel at providing guidance for their futures.

mined to make something of himself.”

Today Officer Nix talks about how Will would frequently stop into the PAL Center when home on a break from college. She would see Will talking with some of the younger kids, showing an interest in what they were doing, and offering guidance as needed. “I never asked Will to talk to the younger kids,” said Officer Nix. “He just did it on his own. He wanted the younger kids to realize that if he could make something of his life, they could, too.”

It's clear that – since Will saw the value of having “Coach” Nix and the other PAL officers in his own life – he has enjoyed the opportunity to play a similar role during his visits to the PAL Center, providing guidance and support to other young PAL kids. What a testament to the value of the PAL program.



For more information about the KCMO Police Athletic League, visit kcpal.org.

