

## A Gift to Remember – The Sharrod Patterson Memorial Scholarship

*When someone impacts our lives so deeply, their tragedy compels an impactful response.*

Such is the case with Brett W. Hoge upon hearing of the sudden passing of Sharrod Patterson, an educator with Quality Education Academy and a former case manager with Big Brothers Big Sisters.



*Sharrod and Rachel Patterson*

Sharrod A'mir Patterson was born October 9, 1984 to Phillip and Sandra Patterson. He grew up in Gastonia, NC in a loving, faith-filled, and close family. Phillip Patterson describes "Growing up, we didn't have much. I was raised without a father. When I met Sharrod's mother at the Job Corps Center, I was determined that my children would grow up with a father." Sharrod's father was trained as a welder, but there were no welding jobs, so he took a job as a garbage collector to support his new and growing family. "When people threw out their toys, I'd clean them up and give them to my boys. They treated the toys as though they were brand new. They were always so excited, happy, and grateful. My boys didn't want all the newest and latest things. 'Things' didn't matter to them; it was more the thought." Mr. Patterson shared a special memory of the bicycles he bought his two sons. "I bought them each a bicycle. Then I sent them to a friend to get a haircut. While they were at the barber, someone stole their bicycles." He never forgot their reaction. "They were AMAZED that someone would steal their bicycles. They were not upset. I was [upset]! I worked hard for those bikes, but they looked at it as somebody must have needed the bikes. 'Things' were not first in their lives. They were more concerned about others."

Mr. Patterson continued, "I told both my boys that we could not afford to send them to college, so they'd have to do well in their academics and sports. We encouraged them and they encouraged us. Every morning when I dropped them at school, they'd get out of the car and we'd all say to each other the Marcus Garvey quote, 'If you haven't confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life. With confidence, you have won even before you have started.' We said that to each other every day. Every day. Sharrod didn't want to play football, but he wanted an education. He practiced regularly. Other neighborhood kids started coming to our front yard to play football. Sharrod had a personality that you wanted to be around. His senior year he was awarded MVP and Scholar Athlete. Only two kids in our county that got athletic scholarships that year and Sharrod was one of them." His athletic abilities earned him a scholarship at Winston-Salem State University where he played Center on the football team. He was the largest member of the team and as others soon learned, had the largest heart. Sharrod's father adds "He wanted the best for everyone... loyal, not selfish, and was happy for others when they succeeded."

Active with the WSSU radio station, Sharrod helped launch the student program on WSSU's 90.5 WSNC. He became the first 4-year college graduate in his family, graduating with a degree in History and Mass Communications. Sharrod married Rachel, whom he met at WSSU, in 2005 when she was a Freshman. They adored each other. Their love story was, in part, grounded in their shared vision and values of community service and service to others. WSSU reinforced this goal with a motto of "Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve". They dated for 10 years prior to marriage to first complete degrees. Rachel shares "we then settled in Winston-Salem to give back to the City that taught us to be teachers". After college, Sharrod went to work for the Winston-Salem affiliate of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS) as a Case Manager. He worked at BBBS three years before accepting a position as a history teacher with Quality Education Academy Schools (QEA). QEA is a small, public charter school in Winston-Salem with focus on African-American and Latino students who needed extra care and encouragement to find their potential. The school invests in a quality education, helps students find and apply their gifts and talents, and requires active participation from the student's parent(s). Again, Sharrod was making an impact. School CEO, Ms. Tonya Bellanger states "Sharrod was the most dedicated servant teacher at the school. He went above and beyond for students, staff, and parents and had a major impact on the school environment. And he was always there for everyone. I often had to text Rachel and encourage her to take away his phone/computer to stop working." Sharrod knew the importance of education. At WSSU, he joined "Real Men Teach", an initiative formed to encourage more black males to enter teaching. Rachel and Sharrod often discussed their dream of someday being able to give a scholarship to a deserving student. Brett Hoge met Sharrod when Brett was on the BBBS Board. He witnessed the influence Sharrod had on kids. The "Littles" knew Sharrod genuinely cared about them, but they also knew he wouldn't buy their stories for not doing what was needed or expected – whether in the program, at home, or in school. They respected him and Sharrod took them under his wing, encouraged and guided them toward their goals – even long after he left Big Brothers Big Sisters. He was always present for them. Brett served as a Big Brother. "It meant something and something different when Sharrod spoke to these kids." Sharrod lived his values, which impacted youth and adults alike. Sharrod's work was more than a paycheck. He helped kids become everything they were created to be. Such care and other-centeredness wasn't new for Sharrod. Sharrod's father remembers how he cared for his school classmates and was always invited to homes of a diverse mix of other students ....and their parents. "One of Sharrod's close school friends had diabetes. He looked after him and always worried about his blood sugar levels."



Sharrod had a presence. His sheer size was, in itself, a commanding presence, but more than that, it was his kind heart and generous spirit that reflected in how he carried himself. Pam Anglin, former supervisor at Big Brothers Big Sisters explains "He was always the helping hand on every task regardless whether it was his job to do the task. He always showed up to help...and showed up in kindness. I remember, we were doing our first website and he trained me on how to do a website. Then, he helped with the graphic design, took the pictures, and did all the photo editing needed. He had an artistic, creative talent." When Sharrod went to work at QEA as an educator, he had the opportunity to work with the same BBBS kids.

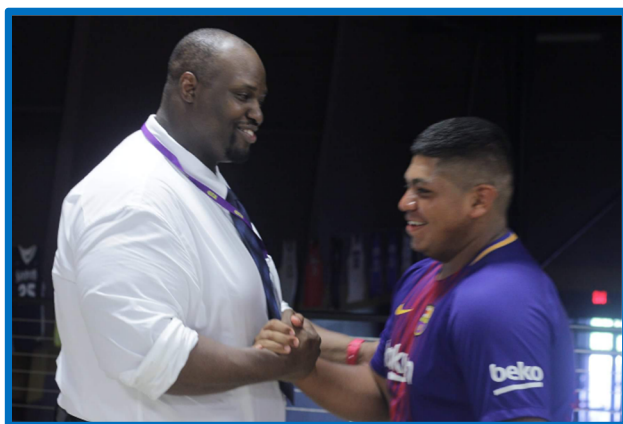
Even years after the students graduated, Sharrod continued his contact and support of students. DaJ Burnett, a former student texted Rachel, “while I was a student at QEA, ‘Pat’ became our tech dad, someone we could talk to, someone who wouldn’t judge, someone who genuinely cared about us and always showed us REAL love. I have him to thank for making such an impact on my life. So much so that I came to work under him after I completed undergrad— and was excited about it! No matter what challenges I faced— no matter what happened, Mr. Patterson always encouraged me and continued to teach me something new DAILY! He was and still is a GEM— Anyone who came in contact with him is a better person because of him. I will always love Pat, and hold him near to my heart.”



Sharrod Patterson was called home on April 7, 2022. Sharrod developed a rare seizure disorder, which did not deter his service and dedication, but ultimately took his life. Rachel was by his side when he passed. When Brett Hoge was notified, he immediately called Rachel to offer any and all help she might need. He was thinking maybe to help with unexpected costs. But Rachel shared their bigger dream – to find a way to create a legacy in Sharrod’s name to benefit others, specifically an annual scholarship for graduating seniors of QEA. Brett, who serves on the Board of Directors of the Shallow Ford Foundation, immediately offered a generous gift to help seed the scholarship fund and asked Rachel to guide the Foundation in creating the criteria that would best reflect Sharrod’s life. The legacy was started – the Sharrod Patterson Memorial Scholarship. With strength and commitment to their shared dreams, Rachel pressed through her grief and worked with her father-in-law to shape the scholarship guidelines. Specifically, the scholarship is for a QEA graduating senior with a history of service to others and who wants to attend an HBCU toward a career in teaching, technology, or history – all areas of Sharrod’s talent and interest. In this first year of the scholarship, the award will be \$5,000. Applications are now open and the first scholarship will be awarded in May. The amount of future year awards will be based on the additional dollars raised for the fund, which several friends and family members are now working on, including Brett and Rachel. Sharrod influenced, shaped, and impacted everyone he met. “Sharrod had a heart that you can’t describe in words” said Hoge. Now, his impact will continue through the scholarship created in his memory by those he influenced throughout his meaningful and too-short life.



*“We all loved Sharrod,”* said his father about his family. *“When he passed, we learned that there was a whole other world that loved him, too. I am so proud of my boys and feel blessed that God gave me Sharrod for 37 years and gave me an opportunity to be his father for 37 years. I’m going to miss him.”*



Brett Hoge summed up his thoughts, *“Sharrod was the role model that I aspire to be.”*

For more information about the scholarship or to make a tax-deductible contribution to the scholarship fund, visit: [shallowfordfoundation.org/patterson](http://shallowfordfoundation.org/patterson)



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