

Good evening, my name is Nyla Palmer, and I have been involved with the Next Level Community Development Center for several years. Although I stopped coming when I got involved in extracurricular activities, Next Level continued to support me. When I went to 7th grade, I started cheering therefore I could no longer participate in next Levels after school program or summer camp, but I still carried the lessons that I was taught with me every day, and I never forgot how my peers and teachers impacted my life. From the step shows, book club, music videos, and swimming, I know now that I was living through some of the best days of my life and didn't even realize it. As the years went on, I started to find myself but the things I learned at Next level helped me grow. The lessons about abstinence, mental health, leadership, and academics made transitioning to high school much easier since I was already educated on things the average 9th grader didn't know therefore, I was not easily peer pressured and I stood firm on my words.

During high school I suffered the loss of my grandfather, and even though at this time Next Level was not on my mind, I was on theirs. I remember my mom saying Ms. Keisha had sent us a basket with a note. From this day forward I knew that even though I went off to find myself, Next Level was still there, which is what encouraged me to participate in the ELITE program, and it was the best decision I ever made. ELITE has been life changing in so many ways. Ms. Jackson always sent us scholarship opportunities and made sure we were on track. Ms. Star coached us in leadership skills, and Ms. Eileen brought speakers in to give us advice to be better prepared for the workforce. Mr. Harvey coached us on abstinence to make sure we were educated before going into the adult world. All these things are crucial to be successful in the future and Next Level Provided it all.

The ELITE program also gave me the opportunity to do my Job Club internship at Next Level. I was able to connect with the students and build unforgettable bonds. To my host teachers, thank you for taking me under your wing and making sure I learned everything I needed. And to the students, I know the feeling of not wanting to come to camp, and I know that right now it may seem like you're just being forced to go by your parents, but when you get older you will realize how much Next Level cares about you. So have fun, the staff does everything in their power to make sure you're fed, have fun, and learn, so take advantage of the amazing opportunities presented to you, because if you don't...you will wish you did.

To the entire Next Level staff, Thank you. Thank you for never forgetting about me, thank you for smiling at me when I walked through those doors. There were times when I was at my lowest and Next Level lifted me without even knowing. Thank you for

teaching and guiding me. I truly appreciate each and every one of you and this will not be the last time you will see me at Next Level. Thank you.