

## Semcac Head Start- St. Charles Success Story

### The Jabaree Kolter Story

“If we have 13 children here in class and one more comes to school, how many children would we have then?”

“Fourteen, and then if one more comes, there would be fifteen, and another would be sixteen.”

“What is a word that rhymes with door?” “Store, pour, snore, floor.”

“If there are three boys sitting at the table and two girls, are there more girls or more boys?” “One more boy. And five kids all together.”

“What things do cars and trucks both have?” “Four wheels, a steering wheel, and probably a horn.”

“What makes a car and truck different?” “Cars carry people and trucks take stuff from one place to another.”

From an IEP defining developmental delays to educational goals which greatly exceed age typical expectations, Jabaree Kolter continues to amaze his teachers. Through dual enrollment collaboration with the St. Charles ECSE and Head Start programs, Jabaree’s progress has been nothing short of incredible in a span of a little over a year. He challenges his teachers to ask him questions he doesn’t know. Just give him time, he’ll figure it out! These are the kinds of things Jabaree’s great-grandmother hears when she attends parent teacher conferences.

Much of Jabaree’s success can be attributed to his nearly 70 year old great-grandmother, Bonnie Todd. Bonnie is providing a secure, nurturing, stable and loving home for Jabaree and his big brother Quintin. Bonnie is part of the sandwich generation who until recently cared for her 95 year old mother while nurturing 4 ½ year old Jabaree and 7 year old Quintin. Throughout her life time, Bonnie has been there for her family which spanned five generations. Bonnie has confessed that when she sees a need, she steps in to meet it. She saw Jabaree and Quintin needed the stability of a nurturing home, protecting them from an adverse situation, so she stepped in to make a difference. And, what a difference that has made in Jabaree’s life!

From a quiet, timid little guy whose interests revolved around movies and Spiderman, a year later, Jabaree’s teachers report Jabaree is the class leader. He answers high level math questions and complex comprehensive ones. Jabaree can write his entire first and last name legibly, naming each letter correctly. Jabaree also writes letters of the alphabet, numerals, and three and four letter words. He counts well past 50 without any adult help. He practices these things at home, too. Jabaree is friends with everyone in the classroom. He is empathetic, always sure to include every classmate. Jabaree’s kindness towards others makes him everyone’s friend. His smile is engaging and his laugh is infectious. His sense of humor is enjoyably silly, too.

While at Head Start, Jabaree has starred, and quite frankly stolen the show, in off-Broadway classroom productions of *Henny Penny* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. He predicts what comes next in stories and retells them with uncanny accuracy. In the dramatic play area, he has cooked four course meals as a chef; coming up with remarkable food creations with his ultimate favorite food, hotdogs! Jabaree teases he loves hotdogs so much he just might turn into one!

In closing, Jabaree’s great grandmother teases that she worries, too. She jokes that she is worried she might be raising a hotdog someday! She really would like him to eat better. Bonnie says she has helped her family, friends, and neighbors her whole life and will continue to help anyone who needs it. It is a way to pay it forward as she is so grateful for her adoptive mother who provided a home for Bonnie and older brother when they were very young. While choking up a bit when thinking of Jabaree’s progress, Grandma Bonnie admits she is glad that giving Jabaree a good home has helped him do so well in Head Start and ECSE. “School is very important,” she proclaimed.