



The real value of a good education

Spider Jones is a Seneca grad, class of '83. Today, he is a successful broadcaster. His first book will hit store shelves this fall. He's also a sought-after motivational speaker.

Recently, he donated \$5,000 to Seneca College because he not only attributes his success to his college education, he firmly believes he owes Seneca his life.

Spider Jones loves talking with young people – especially youth at risk – about the value of getting a good education. In his motivational speeches, he talks from the heart, telling his life story. He freely admits to his audiences, "If it wasn't for Seneca College, I'm sure I would be in the hospital or dead right now."

Out of gratitude, he recently thanked Seneca by making a \$5,000 donation to support the Radio and Broadcasting Department, the program that changed his life.

He credits his teachers and President Newbom for helping him to discover his full potential, and for giving him the encouragement, knowledge, and skills he needed to

live his dream to be a broadcaster. Spider is also thankful that Seneca's education allowed him to leave a dangerous, unsavoury past behind, one that he's sure he wouldn't have survived.

A misdiagnosis left him with no hope
Spider grew up in tough Windsor, Detroit and Toronto neighbourhoods. He thought he had no choice but to run with street gangs – he was sure he was "stupid" and had no right to a future.

This belief came from being told by his teachers that he had a severe learning disability, and that his place was in a remedial class.

It is true that Spider hadn't done well in elementary school, but his problem was not caused by a disability – it stemmed from his phobia of the drug. As a result, he didn't get much sleep. At school, he couldn't concentrate and often dozed off in the classroom. His grades were bad, but the remedial class didn't solve his problem.

He didn't fit in, and started skipping classes... then disappearing for whole days. He was treated so often that eventually his teachers stopped trying to drug him back to school. So as a graduate of Grade 4, his options narrowed to a life of crime, and learning to box for a living.

Luck was on his side – he did survive 12 years in gangs. And he did make a success of his boxing career, winning three Golden Glove championships and being an Maharajah All's sparring partner when he was in Toronto.

But with little education and even less hope, the closest Spider came to his dream of being a radio broadcaster was working as a DJ in a very rough bar that he describes as "a social club for the underworld." With his street smarts and fighting experience, the club had him double as their bouncer.

One night, a dangerous situation got out of hand, and he was almost killed.

At that point, his wife reminded Spider of his dream, the one he had never given up on. She encouraged him to leave behind this perilous life,

and to make a better life for himself and their family by going back to school.

He showed up at Seneca's door as a 30-year-old father of four with little education, carrying the oppressive doubt that he may not be capable of succeeding in school. But to his credit, he also had a burning dream, and an aching desire for knowledge.

The people at Seneca College saw a spark in Spider Jones – they recognized possibilities. They offered him a chance.

Spider grabbed it. He worked very hard and passed all of his college prep courses. He then went on to do very well in his two-year Radio Broadcasting program.

Now, Spider works as a radio broadcaster at Toronto's CP24, and has his own television show on ESPN. His walls are lined with photos of himself with celebrities he's interviewed – they include countless sports stars, and entertainers like

Roy Orbison, Frankie Miller, and the Four Tops. He considers these his trophies of success – one sign that his dream has come true.

The importance of giving back

Spider believes Margaret Hauser, his English teacher at Seneca College, played a crucial role in turning his life around. "She was a wonderful woman who touched my heart. She made me believe in me. She was a great mentor to me, and she's the reason why I mentor others today."

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Recently, Spider was honored and

honored to receive the Ontario Premier's Award in the Creative Arts and Design category. It recognized his triumph over adversity, his many career successes and the impact of his dedicated volunteer work on others.

He took his \$5,000 cash award and donated it to Seneca College.

He says, "I owe so much to Seneca that I had to give something back. It's a wonderful feeling to know that my money will help other people to bring their dream into reality."

"I'll encourage every grad who has

been helped by Seneca to realize their own dream, to give back too. You just don't know how much you will be changing someone else's life – look at what Seneca did for me." ■

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