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DON'T QUIT ON YOURSELF

By Israelin Shockness, Ph.D.
Pride Youth Education Columnist

"If you quit school, you quit on yourself." These were the words that Charles Jones, more popularly known as "Spider" Jones, shared with members and supporters of Agincourt Community Services Association at its annual general meeting, a few days ago. His message went out to young people, as well as to older ones, who had dropped out of school and were getting into trouble.

This is a particularly important message, considering who "Spider" Jones is, and who he was. Today, he's the host of his own radio show,

The Spider Jones Show, on CFRB, "Canada's Number One A.M." station. He is a three-time holder of the Golden Glove championship and, in 1996, was inducted into the Canadian Boxing Hall of Fame. Spider Jones was also recently voted "M.C. of the Year", as well as "Boxing Commentator of the Year", by the World Boxing Federation. He has won several awards as a journalist in both music and boxing, and is a prominent motivational speaker.

As a young person reading about this man's accomplishments, you may be thinking about what you would like to do when you grow up. However, if you are frequently being suspended from school, if you are frequently in fights, or if you don't care for school—you may be thinking there is no way you could ever accomplish anything you'd be proud of.

If you are in trouble with the law, if you have dropped out of school, or if you are involved with a gang, you may also be thinking that you have messed up so badly that there could be no way of ever redeeming yourself. Maybe everyone has given up on you: your teachers, your parents and friends. Even you may have given up on yourself. You know that

without an education and with so much delinquency, you are going nowhere.

This is true. But you have a choice. You can make a right-about turn. You may be thinking, "Sure! But how?" The first place to start is with your education. As Jones explains, "When you quit school, you quit on yourself." The way to reverse this is to believe in yourself and go back to school. There are several ways of restarting your education, including through correspondence (where you work at your own pace) or through night school. There are other options as well.

You also have a good role model in Spider Jones. Despite the fact that he has a glamorous and successful career today, at one time, he was on a course of destruction. As a young boy, he wanted to be a deejay and radioman. However, born into a poor family in Windsor, Ontario, he seemed to have very little chance of accomplishing his goal. Teased because of his race, his vibrant outgoing personality soon changed—and he became a very withdrawn little boy. His experience at school had taken a toll on his self-esteem. When the teasing became unbearable, Spider Jones decided to fight back. He got himself into all kinds of trouble, and with poor performance in school, he was soon put into a slow-learners' class. He dropped out of school at age 14, and began running with the gangs, carrying a gun and a blade. It was not long before he got involved in brawls, robberies, and muggings, and lived life on the street. Consequently, he spent several years in jail.

He could have continued on this path, and ended up dead or in jail, again. However, he met someone whom he credits with saving his life. A young woman, Jackie Robinson (who later became his wife) encouraged him to go back to school and not to quit on himself. He followed her advice, going back to school and attending college when he was already thirty-five.



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"Spider" Jones at ACSA annual meeting

Spider Jones was able to turn his life around, for with the education he had received, he was able to launch his career in broadcasting—a dream that he once had, but had given up.

If you are a young person who has messed up, think of making a change. Start with your education, for it is education that will empower you to make the kinds of changes you need to make. **PRIDE**

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