

Hello, my name is Eric Miller. My goal is to see youth obtain their full potential in life. At the age of six I learned how to mow lawns and I was taught by my cousin. Kenneth Smith was a young man who had a lot of ambitions in life and struggled. I would always do lawns at the age of 6, 7, 8 years old for elderly people. So they would invite me on the porch, make lemonade for me, make cookies, after I would finish the lawns. And when I was in the 9th grade, I remember looking at the TV and I saw a lot of blood on the screen. That was of my cousin Kenneth he was killed. Growing up in Memphis, what I saw was a lot of youth who did not make it past their formative years, past their teenage years. And I said to myself even then that, you know what, it's gotta be something better. I ended up going to New York City with Chrysler. Chrysler was my first full time employed type job that I had, so worked in New York, got a chance to meet my wonderful wife. We began his journey together, you know, and that's what I really appreciated from... It was great... [Audible gunshots in the distance]... See that's common here right. Right. And that's the problem. Those are gunshots. Those are gunshots, right. [loud car speeds away]... somebody speeding away, right... right... So... So what you just heard is what youth get accustomed to hearing on a daily basis. You're right outside of a school. You heard a lot of gunshots. I created the *Lawn Academy* to provide an avenue for youth to positively contribute to their communities and to succeed a life.

But the idea from the beginning was – every youth has the capacity to learn. But they all learn in different ways. They all use different methods to learn. She always thought that every kid has that ability within them to succeed. So never give up on the kid. But I look at it as a canvas to teach a greater lesson in life. That's how I take it. So when I look at the lawns, I tell the youth it's your responsibility to have character. And that is, if it's 90 degrees, 95 degrees outside, that person in their home is 80, 85 years old or they're crippled. They can't come out here. We should feel honored to come out and take care of

someone else, because I believe a youth needs to be a part of the revitalization of whatever is going on. They need to touch, feel and be a part of making the rebirth occur even in the City of Detroit. So when that happens and then the youth is invested in that rebuilding... then that youth develops a sense of compassion for others, for others in a community. Now they see themselves as a giver, as a nurturer in the community and not as a taker. And it's my responsibility to make sure that I give the youth the tools that they need to succeed in life.