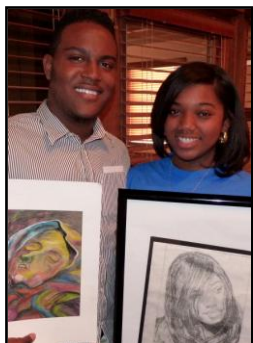




## Student Stories

### *How CATC changes lives, gives hope and opportunity*



**“We’ve had an influence on getting other kids to go to CATC for enrichment or credit recovery. Things you learn at CATC help you take on the world.” - Geno G., CATC graduate 2011**

Destiny and Geno are first cousins but their lives are so intertwined they could easily be brother and sister. A year apart in age, they grew up in Central Avondale, going to school and church together, singing in choir, sharing family gatherings and overnights at their grandparents’.

Their families have faced economic and social challenges, but achievement and respect were always honored. That and the close ties to each other helped them not get swept up in dangerous neighborhood drama. “There were shootings on our street,” says Geno, “and times when I had to walk through drug transactions and people being careful of the police.”

Destiny’s family moved to North Avondale when she was 13 but the pair stayed as close as ever. “She’s my guide,” says Geno, the younger of the two. They attended Withrow International High School and took the bus together. Both attended advanced-placement classes, joined an international baccalaureate program, and were the only two students serving on the neighborhood school guidance committee known as the LSDMC, or local decision-making committee.

Destiny learned about CATC at a college fair when she was a sophomore. She was too young for the program but persisted, was allowed to audit classes, then participated through her senior year. She and Geno share a love of art from way back. “My mom always let us express ourselves, using crayon shavings or anything available,” says Destiny. But she noticed that CATC offers a lot more. “I’ve seen the instructors here reach out to students and ask ‘what’s going on in your life?’” she recalls. Naturally, she encouraged Geno to check out the program.

“You think you’re coming here for art or credits, but you enrich yourself in several areas,” comments Geno. He has learned how to manage his time better and to speak publicly at CATC. “I decided to become class president and organized school lectures,” he reports. Both began tutoring and mentoring. Destiny mentors four students and was named a Dream Maker Outstanding Student by the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative. Geno believes what he learned at CATC is helping him to develop talent in other young people. “I increased my skills in ways I can help kids take on responsibility.” His work with young people, through Carmel Presbyterian Church in Avondale, earned Geno the Simon A. Lazarus Humanitarian Award.

Destiny and Geno both took advantage of the Bridging the Gap program at CATC. As a result, Destiny now works at Cincinnati Children’s and is in her third year at the College of Mount St. Joseph. Geno is starting his new job at Good Samaritan Hospital, is in his sophomore year at Xavier University, and plans to become an anesthesiologist. They continue to network with the contacts they made through CATC, and to actively mentor others. That includes recruiting students and kids from their neighborhoods into the program at CATC. “Things I learned at CATC are helping me take on the world,” says Geno. He and his cousin want to share the wealth.