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## THE SAMARITAN; One-Man Agency Battles and Begs To Help Youths In Southeast Area

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Calvin Woodland sneaks up to the entrance of Fields Record Shop on Alabama Avenue in Southeast Washington, opens the door and spots the owner fingering through some records. The man turns around and sees Woodland. He looks wary.

"I need some help," Woodland says, explaining that he wants money to buy hot dogs for some youths he plans to take to a football game at Anacostia High School that afternoon.

Like many other merchants in Southeast, the owner has heard Woodland's pleas often over the years, yet he walks over to the cash register, and Woodland follows, never letting up. "You do a good business," he tells the owner.

Without saying a word, the owner reaches into the cash register and obligingly hands over \$11. Woodland thanks him and leaves.

Woodland already had talked the school principal into admitting the youths to the game free. Now all Woodland has to do is find a way to fit 22 of them into two cars and get them to the stadium.

Fifteen minutes before game time, with the kids laughing, playing and ready to go, a neighbor drives into the parking lot outside Woodland's apartment building on Hartford Street SE in a city-owned van.

"You're just who I've been waiting for," Woodland says, walking over to the driver's side.

"Calvin, I don't have time to be bothered with you," she says. "I'm going to eat my lunch." Again, Woodland doesn't let up. Finally, and somewhat reluctantly, the neighbor consents. "I knew I shouldn't have come home," she says.

Calvin Woodland is the unofficial guardian, big brother and neighborhood organizer to dozens of kids in the grimy public housing projects like Stanton Dwellings and Woodland Terrace and the forgotten rows of crowded and crumbling apartment buildings overlooking the Suitland Parkway and the city line.

Here in the spider web of side streets that spin off Alabama Avenue and Naylor Road, in one of

the poorest sections of Washington, the 43-year-old short, gruff and scrappy former boxer has been a kind of glue holding together the children of the ghetto over the past 18 years. A Tarnished Hero

Woodland is no fairy tale hero. He has a son who has violated Woodland's own creed of staying out of trouble, and Woodland himself has sometimes been arrested. One of his recent kids is a star football player in the Big Ten. Last year, another was sentenced to 102 years at Lorton for several rapes.

But many of his youths do not go to jail, and for some, that's enough to make Woodland's role essential.

"It's those kind of people who make a difference in that marginal group," Audrey Rowe, the city's commissioner of social services, says of him. "They are respected by the kids. The kids will work their butts off for them . . . . They are legends with the kids."

"If you've been able to keep them through 15 or 16, there is a hump they've got to get over. Getting them over the hump is what you're doing," Rowe says. "Then when they are out there, they can make judgments."

So Woodland is passed on from one brother to another, from cousin to cousin, mother to son. The pictures of some 250 youths line his living room wall. He says there are hundreds more he cannot name, and about 20 have come to live with him at various times.

He often has been unemployed and is rarely compensated for his effort. Yet he can be found every day in his basement apartment or somewhere nearby. There is no time too late or too early to knock on his door. His life is an uneasy mixture of ghetto hustle and law and order, a raw existence devoted to keeping young kids out of trouble.

"Once the system gets them, they're hooked," Woodland says. "We have got to hear the voices of these kids before the police hear them, before the judges hear them and before the gunshot signaling another child lost."

Woodland has earned a reputation for toughness by taking on some of the meanest characters in his neighborhood. He was shot in the knee four years ago while trying to chase some drug dealers out of the neighborhood.

The boys he deals with have to play by his rules, and they are tough rules. He hollers at them. He threatens them. He curses them. He sometimes even hits them.

"I do the best I can for you," Woodland says he tells them. "But I don't go to jail for you once you go there. If you want to get involved with me, stay out of jail. I try to stop you from going to jail. I'll go to court. I'll do anything. I'll go knock on the judge's house. But once you go to jail, I don't go. When the man says, 'You got 10 years,' you do the time by yourself."

Woodland himself has been arrested for disorderly conduct, and last January was arrested for possession of marijuana. He vehemently denies the charges, which were dropped. He says he does not condone lawbreaking, but knows he has to understand its appeal if he's going to reach these kids.

"Do you know what nerve it takes to rob a bank?" he asks. "Do you know what nerve it takes to shoot a cop. It takes nerve to shoot drug s . It takes gumption. They aren't afraid of anything."

He knows how hard it is to steer the kids away from that street value.

"Getting busted means you caught a bad break. It is the way of the ghetto, the way of the hustling life. You sell drugs . . . . All of this is accepted. The hustling way of life is accepted . . . . They are into a trap of everyday survival." Starts With Young Ones

Woodland starts with the kids when they are little tots at 4 and 5 years old and works with some, off and on, until their late teens. Nevertheless, he says, at best he only gets to know about 75 percent of a kid and the other 25 percent is doubt. "I don't know the thoughts of these kids," he says. "They b----- you . . . They get to know you. But you're very lucky if you get to know them."

Currently Woodland is paid \$11,000 a year as an "operational aide" for the mayor's command center, the city's civil defense communications office that handles human emergencies between disasters. He has held the job for about a year after being unemployed for three years.

Instead of sitting in the center's headquarters every day and answering emergency calls, he is out on the streets, hustling for his kids, running informal football games. He makes rare appearances at work, except to pick up his paycheck every two weeks.

Some staff members don't know what he does. "That's some of Mr. Jordan's business," says one, referring to Sam Jordan, the acting deputy director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, the man who hired Woodland.

Jordan, himself a veteran street troubleshooter, says he talks to Woodland every day. "He mainly deals in the community, finding out what things are going on and keeping tabs on trouble spots," Jordan says of Woodland. "You waste his time, sitting him behind a desk. He needs to be out there with the kids." The Woodland Raiders -

In some respects, Calvin Woodland is a one-man social services agency, counseling children, mothers, fathers, putting people in touch with the government, lending a neighbor a wrench. But for many of the past 15 years, much of his life centered on his football team, the Woodland Raiders.

For 10 straight years, his teams were rarely defeated in their games against Boys Club and other little league teams and became somewhat of a legend in the community.

On a rainy fall afternoon, 27 kids wait on a muddy field for football practice. Their ages and sizes run from a short 7-year-old whose hands can barely wrap around a football to the lanky 16-year-old who can catch anything Woodland throws his way.

Woodland arrives 15 minutes late and barks his first order.

"Give me a lap," he tells the players. They clap and cheer as they run around the field.

"Come on, Woody," Woodland screams at a chubby kid who is running several feet behind the pack. "Come on, Woody." The other players cheer him on.

"All right. On your knees," Woodland shouts. Some players look bewildered. Others drop to the ground.

He makes them crawl about 50 yards in the mud. "You got to be in shape," he says. He walks behind the players and uses his belt on anyone who takes his knees off the ground.

Next they run pass patterns, and end the hour-long practice with a lap around the field. Two weeks later, his football practices stop. Woodland has not been able to raise the money for uniforms. There would be no Woodland Raiders this year.

As Woodland remembers the beginning of the team, which has barely operated since 1979, two neighborhood gangs were preparing to fight. One gang leader asked Woodland if he would fight on their side and Woodland said he would--if they fought with their hands instead of sticks, knives and guns.

The gang members agreed and Woodland said if anyone backed down they would have to do things his way. Meanwhile, he told a friend with a starter pistol to hide where the fight was to take place. As his gang headed to the fight, his friend fired several shots at them. Everyone ran. From that point on, things had to be done Woodland's way.

He sat down with the kids to find an alternative to street fights. The older males wanted dances and cabarets; the younger kids wanted a football team. With no resources and no coaching ability, Woodland formed a team.

"We had guys from all walks of life," recalls Michael Martin, a member on one of Woodland's early teams who now is a star wide receiver for the University of Illinois. "We had guys who had gotten out of jail, guys who were stealing."

Woodland's Raiders won the battle despite losing some wars along the way. At one point, for instance, a couple of players broke into the home of a woman who had been serving the team postgame refreshments using a key they had taken during one of the postgame parties.

Another time, a 12-year-old player gave the whole team the hallucinogenic drug phencyclidine (PCP), commonly called angel dust, before one game. In every instance, the players involved

were disciplined accordingly, Woodland says.

In fact, Woodland used the team as a way to discipline the kids. In order to play, they had to go to school regularly, keep up their grades and stay out of trouble.

Richard Clark, who is now married and attending school outside of Chicago, says Woodland once caught him on the street when he should have been in school and physically carried him to his classroom. "He was like my street old man," says Clark, who adds that his older brother was "my in-house father."

The team also kept some kids from being hassled. "We did get a lot of breaks from the older kids," recalls Michael Bowie, who played for Woodland in the late 60s. "They would think twice before hitting you or trying to take your money. It was like a hedge toward getting your butt kicked."

Older kids and adults came out to watch his rigorous football practices. At the end of each season, there would be a banquet where trophies and jackets were given to the players. Those jackets were the only winter coats some of them would own. Former Pro Fighter

Woodland, one of four children, grew up on Morton Street off Georgia Avenue NW near Columbia Heights. His father was a chef and cook at a downtown carryout and one of the first blacks to have a truck route for the old Arcade Sunshine laundry company.

Woodland says his childhood consisted mostly of sports, though his father never took him to a football game. A neighborhood recreation director, Earl Richards, would take him to see the Virginia Sailors and the Collegians, semipro teams, play at the Banneker athletic field. After the game, he and his friends would run on the field and toss passes, using a sock for a football.

Woodland loved to fight. His brother-in-law and an insurance man got him involved in boxing. A graduate of Roosevelt High School, he has worked as a mail carrier and at another point a few years ago, he was a community aide at Kramer Junior High School.

Woodland also was an amateur and professional featherweight and lightweight boxer. He says he fought 33 fights, won 31 and had 29 knockouts. His last fight was in 1973. In those years, he would use some of his fight earnings to help his team. A Bed Never Used

On Nov. 16, a family in Woodland's neighborhood is evicted for being \$1,600 behind in rent. He wants to take in a little boy but does not have a bed for him.

Woodland calls Joseph Sharpe, the manager of the Sears store on Alabama Avenue and asks for a bed. Sharpe has been contributing to Woodland's causes since he became manager two years ago. "I sort of inherited Calvin," he explained later. "He's in and out of here about once a month."

Sharpe tells him to come over.

When Woodland gets there, Sharpe's assistant tells him to get a mattress and box springs from the warehouse. But Woodland wants to make sure he's getting a good mattress and says the only way he can tell is to see what he is getting.

He walks around the store floor with the assistant manager in tow and picks out a mattress on display. The assistant manager says he can have it and Woodland goes off to the warehouse to get the box springs.

After loading the bed onto the car, Woodland goes back inside the store. Now that he has the bed, he needs some sheets and pillowcases. Sharpe jokingly says he probably needs a pillow too. Woodland says he does.

The manager throws in two sets of sheets, pillowcases and pillow.

The boy's mother has changed her mind and tells Woodland she would rather he take one of her older daughters instead of her son. Woodland refuses, and says he feels girls are harder for him to discipline than boys. Today the bed sits unused, waiting for the boy.

Calvin Woodland Jr., nicknamed "Rock" and one of four Woodland children, says that before his parents separated more than 20 different kids lived with them for various periods of time. One 7-year-old kid Woodland found sleeping in a telephone booth lived with them for three years before his mother came and got him.

"At one time I thought he cared more about other kids than me," says the younger Woodland, 20. "A lot of time we didn't get all the attention . . . It was like growing up with a celebrity in the neighborhood."

He says many kids used to think his family was rich because what his father did for them. "But we were the same as them," he said.

He says he got into a lot of fights in the neighborhood because of his father. "People would say, 'you think you're bad because your father is Calvin Woodland.' "

The younger Woodland has been picked up on various charges from disorderly conduct to possession of PCP. Five of the charges were dropped and he was found innocent on a sixth. He says when he was a teen-ager he got into trouble for cutting classes and fighting in school.

"I was making my father look bad," he says. "He was out there trying to keep kids from doing the things I was doing."

"Rock loves the dollar," his father says. "He loves to chase the dollar."

It's hard for Woodland to compete with the dollar.

Says Robert Mavins, a former Raider who has been unemployed for more than one year: "He's

not in a position to really help us financially. I just look for advice.

"You look at the job rate, the unemployment rate," Mavins says. "I know I am under pressure myself. It might be one day I crack up or slip and do something."

"A lot of young guys want the big time," he says. "Some of them want to be up there selling drugs and living the big life. They want the big cars. I just want to survive . . . I want to look nice and survive. I rather hustle and sell drugs than to be snatching money from your mother or your father. I hope I never come to that stage."

His brother, Darnell, is now serving time in a Virginia prison camp for a robbery conviction in 1981.

"If I had listened to him (Woodland), I wouldn't be here today," says Darnell Mavins. But he said, "I wanted to get out there and find out for myself. I wanted to be independent. I wanted to get out and see what it was like." Rebuffed by Charity

Two days before Thanksgiving, Woodland goes to the headquarters for Project Harvest, where baskets of food are being given to the needy. He has a list of about 20 neighborhood families who need baskets.

He walks into the basement of a building near 14th and W streets NW. There are cans of food on tables and the floor. In one corner, collard greens are piled on a table and several students are putting the greens in plastic bags.

In past years, he has dealt with the project coordinator, Lillian Greene. But Greene says she is not going to deal with him this year because he never volunteers to help take in donations and contributions for the project.

"This man is well known," Greene says. She complains that he knows merchants in his neighborhood yet he does not bring her contributions from them to the project. "I'm making an example out of you this year," she says.

She turns him down on four separate visits.

Begging is the thing Woodland says he hates most in life. "I don't like begging because of the way people look at you. Well see, I beg in a demanding kind of manner which takes some of the 'I gave you something' off of it. I carry a little dignity with my begging. I go with 'I'll kick your a--.' When you go begging there are some people who think when they give to the kids they automatically think they're giving you something. I will starve before I take something from a kid or something intended for a kid."

Woodland has been working overtime trying to round up toys and clothing for mothers to give their kids. As Christmas approached, he went back to Sears and came away with three bikes; he even branched out into the suburbs for watches and boots, and of course visited merchants in the

neighborhood.

"Most of them don't hear my whole story out before they give," he says. "They will give me \$50 rather than hear my story because at the end of the story they may find I need \$500."

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