

Edwin Desamour

Born and raised in north Philadelphia, Edwin Desamour lived a life similar to many youth who are currently living in the city. His experiences have ultimately led him down a path that has caused him to see both significant difficulty and blinding hope. It is these experiences, both the positive and negative, that have inspired him to pursue a career that has brought him back to his community to empower and serve the youth who are growing up where he did.

Edwin was only 16 years old when he was convicted of 3rd degree murder and ultimately served over eight years in prison. Upon returning home, he was tempted to return to his old life and patterns until he was presented with an opportunity, at a critical moment, to provide crisis intervention and conflict resolution through the Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network (PAAN). During his time with PAAN, Edwin was able to return to his community and provide support to many youth who were following the same original path he had; it was through his work during this time that he was able to help many of these young people find a new way and prevent them from making the decisions he had made. He was also able to demystify the conceptions about prison and his former lifestyle by becoming a positive mentor and role model for many.

Following his time with PAAN, Edwin spent three years as an Education Specialist at Women Organized Against Rape where he was able to help raise awareness about violence and sexual assault. After this, Edwin moved on to work with Congreso as the Latino Juvenile Justice Network Coordinator; this position was funded by the project, Models for Change, through the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Through this project, he was able to provide education about juvenile justice issues specific to the Latino community. The primary function of this position allowed him to create mentoring relationships, which offered opportunities to youth to learn the art of positive decision-making and experience positive lifestyle options.

Edwin's desire to have a positive impact on his community led him to found a not for profit organization called MIMIC: Men in Motion in the Community. As Executive Director, he pulled together a group of men from the community who had also transformed their lives and shared his passion to decrease violence in their neighborhood. During his tenure with MIMIC, he helped to transform Waterloo Playground and create a safe place for children to play and be kids. This place offered a safe haven to many young people growing up in the same neighborhood where he grew up. Today, Waterloo is being completely renovated and will become the safe, family oriented place that Edwin had envisioned so many years ago with MIMIC. This renovation is happening as a result of Edwin's connection to the Make the World Better Foundation (MTWB), founded by Connor Barwin, which tries to create a, "world where people of all ages are empowered to make an impact on their communities."

Edwin is currently serving as a part of the Executive Board for MTWB and assisting in coordination of the revitalization project at Waterloo.

These days, Edwin is a Behavior Specialist at his former middle school, John B. Stetson, in Kensington. He is a positive influence and mentor to the students, as well as a support system for teachers. After a typical workday, he can be found at Waterloo, supporting programs and helping to maintain a healthy and happy environment for young people in West Kensington. A portion of his time at Waterloo is also spent coordinating events that bring in the surrounding community members and encouraging them to become advocates for their space. He recently played an integral part in helping to form the Advisory Council for Waterloo Playground, which will be in place to continue serving the community over time. Edwin also continues his commitment to the neighborhood through volunteerism and consistent participation in events. Edwin is also a successful entrepreneur, opening his own business in the fall of 2019. Desamour Beard Essentials LLC has expanded significantly in a short period of time connecting Edwin to areas all over the country and the globe.

Edwin Desamour is a man who has risen up from adversity and come out triumphant. Like the phoenix, Edwin endured the fire so he could rise from the ashes and become the man he is today. He is a uniquely remarkable man who has made a significant difference in the community that raised him- a constant guiding light and a quiet force who inspires anyone near him to be their best self.