

**Baton Rouge, LA – The Advocate**  
**Keeping It Real for June 26, 2010**  
**Teen says his life changed inside Jetson**

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When Renis Waters, 18, entered the Jetson Center for Youth in early 2009, he had a callous attitude, respected no one and had no goals in life.

Waters' grandfather, John Parker, admitted he wasn't particularly optimistic that the Jetson facility could do much to help the once-troubled teen turn his life around.

But any option was better than losing his grandson to the streets.

"We were afraid for him. If he'd stayed on the streets, he would not have been with us," Parker said.

Waters' placement into the facility helped redirect his path. On June 11, Waters, who is from Westwego, graduated during a ceremony in the Jetson auditorium at Scenic Alternative High School, where he earned his GED.

Waters plans to attend college and major in business after he is released next spring, he said.

His grandfather is thankful. "Before, we were afraid for him coming here because of what we'd heard about the facility, and **now Jetson has saved his life," Parker said.**

The center was on the road to closure after the Legislature voted in 2008 to shut it down. The facility had been plagued for much of its history with allegations of brutality against the teens serving time there. It was transformed into a smaller, regional facility in June 2009.

Waters entered the facility as a result of an action he committed that he wished not to disclose.

"I didn't care about anything, and now I appreciate everything. I'm more respectful to myself and others," said Waters, who also discovered he has artistic talents.

Parker agreed. "He's so much a better person," he said.

Waters said his family's love and motivation helped him stay focused. "He (grandfather) believed in me even when I didn't," Waters said.

Other members of the Jetson Center for Youth staff have offered a hand in helping teens change their lives and stay on course.

“There is a great person inside each of you. You are not the lost. You are one of the chosen,” Scenic Alternative High School Principal Ronnie B. Knox told graduates.

Another graduate, Trenton Carter, 18, said he has benefited from many programs provided at the facility. Carter, who has served about a year at the facility for undisclosed reasons, said he expects to be released later this summer.

He said the center provides students with educational opportunities and “therapeutic” sessions to help them work through negative attitudes.

“Now I think about my actions before I commit them,” he said.

Carter said he plans to get a job and help take care of his younger brother after he is released. Before his placement into Jetson, Carter said he had done some negative things “and I wanted a lot of material things.”

Carter said his priorities have changed. “Now I want essential things more than nonessential things,” he said.

Carter, who is from White Castle, said that after entering Jetson, he was motivated by other young men, including Waters, who worked on getting their diplomas.

“That encouraged me to get mine, and now I encourage others to do the same,” he said.