



Headquarterz crew: Michael Oliver, Tonio Brown, James Johnson, Anton Hosein, Bruce Cainion, Surrie Hammond, Doug Berry, Marcus Dixon. Not pictured William Hitchcock and Damien Lacount.

Who's doing your hair at Headquarterz?

BY
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Columnist

ST. PETERSBURG — As Master Barber Surrie Hammond drove down Central Avenue one day, he spotted a perfect location for a dream he had. His dream was to open a large barbershop that had something for anyone who walked through its doors.

This perfect location was nestled in the heart of the Grand Central District with the promise of plenty of foot traffic from the bus depot and the myriad of shops surrounding it. The location was also large enough to accommodate a large amount of barbers and stylist, which had the potential to bring jobs to the area.

After finding out how reasonable the rent was, there was no stopping him. Hammond searched for a while and finally found a silent partner who shared his dream; and after some elbow grease, Headquarterz Multicultural Barbershop opened March 1, 2011.

Hammond dreams of owning his own barbershop started back when he was a teenager. One day while hanging out with his friends at Childs Park, he found a pair of clippers and started experimenting with them. This happenstance started his love for the craft.

At the age of 24, Hammond enrolled in the cosmetology program at Pinellas Technical Education Center (PTEC), and started working part time at a local barbershop. He had a bright future ahead of him, but like so many young folks he got sidetracked and ended up in the penitentiary.

Unlike many of the young people in prison, Hammond had a skill he could fall back on as the days passed.

"It was a good thing that I had skills and education in barbering. It allowed me to become gainfully employed, stay out of trouble and kept my mind steady and strong," said Hammond.

After being released from prison, he landed a job detailing cars on a car lot. He did so well that he was promoted to manager and transferred to another dealership.

"I was a hard worker who was committed, dedicated and was doing whatever I could to be a law abiding citizen," proclaimed Hammond.

Still cutting hair on the side for friends and family members, he decided to reenter the world of barbering as a student at Sunstate Academy.

"Once I passed my state board exam and had my licenses, it was no turning back. I let go of the auto detailing and became a booth renter who cut hair fulltime day and night, night and day," he said.

Hammond is a perfect example of how hard work and determination can overcome wrong decisions made in our youth. He toiled in other barbershops for five years until he was able to open his own.

Being the consummate businessman he is, Hammond welcomes the opportunity to expand and would love to open up more Headquarterz around the bay area, maybe even with one of the barbers currently working for him.

Accused of being a workaholic, he enjoys spending quality time with his better half and his five children. He also makes sure he gives back to the community. He is a proud sponsor of the Lakewood Junior Spartans along with many other local charities and organizations.

Once you step inside Headquarterz, located at 3153 Central Ave., you feel right

at home. If Hammond is booked, you can choose from nine other barbers: Michael Oliver Sr., Tonio Brown, James Johnson, Anton Hosein, Bruce Cainion, Doug Berry, Marcus Dixon, William Hitchcock and Damien Lacount.

Michael Oliver

Michael Oliver Sr. is considered the "original gangster" of the group, and feels that God led him to the profession. While in prison he had a dream where an angel kept telling him to go to the barbershop.

"I was a little shaken up. I called out and replied, 'I don't know anything about barbering,' and as clear as day I could hear: 'It's okay, God will see you through.'"

After some encouragement from his cousin, Oliver enrolled in a program at Lively Technical Center in Tallahassee that offered courses to inmates. He admits to having some problems with the academic side the course and even got caught cheating.

After the humiliation of being placed in the center of the classroom and scolded by the instructor, he decided to straighten up and fly right. He met a fellow inmate that showed him how to pass his coursework without cheating.

"I was so grateful," said Oliver, "from then on I was cutting with knowledge and I loved it so much I would cut for free."

After reentering society, he managed his family owned barbershop, and eventually came to work for Hammond at Headquarterz. This father of 14 specializes in cuts for the older gentlemen that will separate men from boys.

"I want the world to know that when you look good, you feel good," said Oliver.

Tonio Brown

A plumber by trade, Tonio Brown started cutting his son's hair as a hobby. After getting into some trouble with the law and being on house arrest, he was determined to make some life changes.

Brown decided to make some sacrifices and go back to school to become a barber. He attended American Beauty Institute (AIB) and dropped old habits and old friends. After graduating, he worked in a number of shops, but has been with Hammond since he opened his doors.

Brown is currently enrolled at St. Petersburg College and hopes that by furthering his education, he will become a better businessman.

If you miss him at the barbershop, you might catch him doting on his 12-year-old son. Brown has joint custody, and firmly believes that a good foundation at home and stability will steer his son away from the pitfalls he fell into.

Brown specializes in a good clean edge, tapers and Philly wave cuts. In the future, you may just see him owning his own barbershop, and he aspires to be a strong leader in the community.

"Be consistent in your craft; know your goals because if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything," Brown cautioned.

Bruce Cainion

Bruce Cainion's mother passed away when he was 10 years old and his father raised him and his three brothers by his self. After the expense of taking all four boys and himself to the barber one day, his

father decided to buy some clippers.

Cainion's older brothers taught him how to cut hair and around age 13, he was cutting hair for money. He would go around cutting friends' hair and even whole families would line up for his services.

Trying to find direction, he enrolled at PTEC in their cosmetology program. However, he did not focus on his studies and continued to work without a license. The chance of getting caught was too great so he stopped cutting hair altogether.

Then his life took a turn for the worst and he wound up in prison for 18 months. Finding someone who would hire him with a record was next to impossible. He couldn't even get a job at McDonald's, so he decided to fall back on a skill he had cultivated years before.

"I made a commitment to buckle down with my barbering, change my train of thought, become more organized and develop a better work ethic," said Cainion.

He enrolled in Manhattan Hair Academy in Tampa and secured employment in several shops before walking into Headquarterz. "When I saw the environment I knew that it was the place for me," said Cainion.

If not at the shop, you can find this husband and father of five spending time with his children, working out at the gym or taking part in the International People's Uhuru Democratic Movement.

"Commitment to your craft is essential. You don't have to be the best, just be professional and respect yourself and your profession," finished Cainion.

William Hitchcock

William Hitchcock's first love was not cutting hair; he wanted to be a boxer. Even though his father had him cutting his siblings hair at an early age, his mind was on boxing.

Unfortunately, Hitchcock was diagnosed with a heart condition that made boxing hazardous to his health. Once he

gave the sport up, he went into a deep depression that caused him to make some bad decisions.

"I got tattoos and started making babies. Some of the things I did during that emotional whirlwind were definitely life changing experiences,"

said Hitchcock, "but I made it through to tell my story."

Graduating in 2002 from Loraine's Academy, Hitchcock has not looked back. He enjoys spending time with his three children and continues to box recreationally. In the future he would like to go back to school to be a cardiovascular technician and help in the research of heart disease and sports participation.

James Johnson

A transplant from Jasper, Fla., James Johnson was once a truck and bus driver until he decided he needed a change. Wasting no time, he picked up the phone and started at AIB the next Monday.

Being a barber came naturally to Johnson. Outside of school and the front porch, Headquarterz is the only other place he's cut hair. But you wouldn't know it by his growing clientele.

"It all just fell into place and now, here I am so blessed to work every day for myself, and come off the road and do something that I myself have realized," said Johnson.

Johnson is very passionate about his family, and when it's his turn to have his three boys on the weekend and he's not quite finished with work, you will find his kids right by his side at the shop.

He also has a passion for food and hopes to become an executive chef one day.

Johnson wants to encourage all of the young people out there to work hard and believe in themselves because no matter how many paths the road of life takes you down, remember your passion and work toward it.

"I will eventually fulfill my dream of becoming a chef. I'm not gonna cut hair for the rest of my life. I'll be cooking," finished Johnson.

Anton Hosein

Anton Hosein has been trimming and clipping hair from the early age of 12. When his father bought some equipment to use and decided it wasn't for him, Hosein picked up the clippers and started practicing on himself and his cousin.

By the time he was in high school, he was cutting his friends' hair in the bathroom at school. He decided to make it official and enrolled in AIB. Upon completion of his coursework, he started working for Headquarterz soon after it opened in 2011.

If Hosein is not working, you can catch him spending time with his three sons. He enjoys playing football, basketball and skateboarding with his kids. His eight year old even has aspiration of being a barber and hangs out with his father at the shop.

Marcus Dixon

Marcus Dixon always wanted to be a business owner and one day realized that if he became a barber, he could indeed be his own boss. A graduate of AIB, he quickly went to work at local barbershops.

About eight months ago he walked through the door of Headquarterz and instantly knew he was in the right place.

"Headquarterz is a place with a nice friendly environment and it also has a wide variety of clientele from the community," Dixon said.

Dixon is very passionate about barbering so much so that he does it for free whenever he gets the chance. Giving back to the community is high on his list, so every Veteran's Day you can find him giving free haircuts to those who served our country. He tries to help someone in need every day.

Married with seven children, this proud father enjoys taking his kids to the park, movies, bowling and arena football games. He wants to make sure he spends as much time with them as possible while they are still young.

Dixon feels that going through life with a positive attitude will rub off on others and encourages all children to surround themselves with positive people.

He is willing to volunteer his hair cutting services to organizations that may need help. Please give him a call at 727-482-8605.

Damien Lacount

Damien Lacount is a transplant from Georgia, who as a kid started cutting his own hair because he was tired of getting bad haircuts. His mother decided to cut costs at the barbershop and bought him a pair of clippers.

He worked at two other shops before finding a home at Headquarterz. There his talent for cutting designs into hair has truly blossomed.

"I have a gift as an artist and I don't mind showing it," bragged Lacount. "I feel that it is important to take whatever you're good at and promote it."

Whether it is braiding or relaxing, whatever it is, master it."

Lacount strives to be the best role model for his children that he can possibly be. His girls look to him for guidance and he makes sure he shows them what role a man plays in a family.

"My oldest daughter believes in me so much that she's my biggest supporter. She tells everyone she knows, and even people she doesn't know, that her daddy is a barber and that he can cut their hair."

In Lacounts spare time he enjoys doing a bit of light handiwork around the house to keep it in tip top shape. He lays carpet and tile and does carpentry work.

Douglas Berry

At an early age, Douglas Berry was inspired by his grandfather to start cutting hair. His grandfather did not want to go to the barbershop anymore, so he decided that he would be his barber.

He branched off from his grandfather and started cutting his little brother's hair, the neighborhood kids and his friends' hair in the bathroom at school with his good friend Rodney Robinson who has since passed on.

Berry's journey from cutting hair in the school bathroom to mastering his craft was not a short one. He enrolled in Loraine's Academy at the age of 18, but did not finish. He began washing dishes at several different nursing homes and even did a stint as a janitor in the Pinellas County School system.

Those jobs paid the bills, but there was no future in them. So he enrolled back in school and graduated from Academy of Beauty & Business in 2006.

Berry specializes in bald fades, which he thanks his friend Derrick for helping him master the skill. When asked about his hobbies, he listed cutting hair, but he has more up his sleeves than styling the masses.

Look for his clothing line due out soon called the "Fly Barber Society." It will specialize in keeping barbers looking fly.

At home, he's a loving father that cherishes every moment with his children.

"I'm in all my kids' lives," said Berry. Being an active and engaged father is a must."

Headquarterz is opened Mon.-Sat. from 8 a.m. - 7 p.m., and on Sun. from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Currently there are openings for three qualified, licensed barbers and a hair stylist or hair braider. You must bring your own clientele. Haircuts range from \$10-\$15, and Tues.-Wed., \$5 cuts are available all day. Seniors 55 and older pay only \$10. Call 727-323-5751 for information.



Damien Lacount



William Hitchcock