

# Devon Wimberly

## *Sharing and Giving*



BY JENNA CAPUTO / PHOTOS BY ANGELA MIA PHOTOGRAPHY & CONTRIBUTED BY DEVON WIMBERLY

Devon Wimberly is one of those people that give of themselves to others every waking moment of the day (and he's awake a lot more than he's asleep!).

Growing up in The Corning Homes in North Albany, Devon was very close with his nuclear family—his mother and three siblings plus his aunt and her five children. His mom and aunt were sisters that ended up raising their families with two brothers, making the family dynamic even closer, something Devon has always appreciated. “We didn’t have much. But at least we had each other,” he says. And because of that, it was a fun childhood. “We played stick ball, today they call it whiffle ball. Rumble Fumble was the name we used to describe tackle football games played on a slanted hill with a massive oak tree smack dab in the middle of the hill. We gained balance and athleticism from basketball and flipping from mattresses on that hill as well. For the most part it was create it and you can play it. Imagine that freedom. Free as the air we breathe. Snake hunting and trading baseball cards for Icees—yeah, that kind of childhood.”

Always passionate about sports, he ended up playing football for Union College, where he was granted the unheard-of honor of being a two-time Captain and all the privileges that came with being a top athlete. After graduation, he attended an NFL tryout for the NY Giants. Arriving at the tryout with his invitation in hand, he went through the written exam as well as the drills and coverage. At the meeting after practice, he received his walking papers. It was a hard reality check. “I was knocked down and stripped of the single most important facet in my life. I knew what happened was bad, but it was far more devastating to my ego than I could have ever imagined, as I was very much unprepared for life without the cheers, the bands, and teammates telling me how great I am. A young man left to pick up the pieces and hit the restart button on life. I was broken. So I turned my energies outward. Now, if I can’t make it, that doesn’t necessarily mean I can’t promote

and support others earlier and often on how to navigate to get their shot. My setback became my setup for my comeback.”

And comeback he did. Since that day, he has received his certifications to coach speed and agility, yoga, flexibility and mobility, strength and conditioning, cardiopulmonary respiratory, first aid, and he’s also a certified Therapeutic Crisis Intervention In Schools teacher. He spends his days as a Teacher Assistant at Niskayuna High School. In addition to his outside work as a Defensive Coordinator and Board Member for the Niskayuna Capital District Youth Football and Cheer League, he also coaches for the school. Last year he was the Freshman Basketball Head Coach, Junior Varsity Football Head Coach, and an Assistant Coach for the outdoor track team, all while running his own business, Wimberly Athletics and Training.

The facility, supported by the Friendship Baptist Church, is located in Schenectady and designs programs for teams, small groups, and private individuals, including mommy boot camps, team workouts, and individualized sessions for spot-specific training. But it’s not all about sports at Wimberly Athletics. They also help to support the various Schenectady City’s missions, by collecting food and clothes, and by opening their doors to the community at large. In addition, they support Niskayuna Now—an organization to ensure no child or family is left hungry—by shopping for and donating to their events. Devon is also one of their on-call drivers and assists in their distribution center, not to mention has worked with teams to bundle over a million masks for New York State during the pandemic. He also volunteers at youth STEM classes at RPI and drives those in need to their hospital appointments, in addition to constantly promoting other local small businesses, especially those that serve others. “It’s bigger than just who walks in our doors, you know?” says Devon. “Being of service creates a selflessness unparalleled. So to me, it’s always better to give than it is to receive!”





Despite his days filled to the brim, he doesn't plan to stop giving. Devon recently launched a collaboration with MARIA'S Restaurant, offering classes and prepared meals and smoothies for parents and athletes always on the move but still wanting to eat and live healthy. He also wants to create a children's garden where kids can go to grow, pick, and taste organically grown fruits and veggies in a community setting.

All of his work is important to him, but his passion lies in working in the youth sports realm. "There is nothing more rewarding than youth sports," he says. "Feeling the reward of serving others while building relationships with community members and living the dream of being a father with children in youth sports are all the wonderful reasons why I began coaching the Niskayuna Youth Football and Cheer teams over ten years ago. We have come a long way since then, winless seasons have converted to undefeated seasons for the past five years and one



single-loss season, making youth football a fantastic experience under President Scott Mogavero and Tim Brennan. That program alone has taught me leaps and bounds the benefits of organically creating a space for young children to develop."

Devon also leads a program that circles graduating athletes back to work with the younger athletes in the Junior Coaches Program. "Communities are built on the youth experiences," says Devon. "What are we instilling, individuality or togetherness? Winning together, now that's the ticket!" There is a special place in Devon's heart for working with students with disabilities as well. "In all that I do I must not forget that everyone is not just as I am," he says. "They have such a wonderful perspective on life, and I am honored to be a part of their community."

When COVID hit, he jumped right to work again, creating Coaches Lab and Waking up with Coach Wimberly within a week of schools shutting down. The daily morning program streams live on social media for all who want to be sure exercise and movement are still a part of their day. He also opened the gym for students of parents who were left reeling on where they could turn to for childcare help while they still had to work. Devon is honored to assist in their children's education.

But once COVID is over, he's ready to go out to make full human contact. "I'm hugging everybody!" he says. "Mailman! Amazon driver! The girl who bags the groceries at Coop, my neighbors, along with my student athletes. High fives, hugs, and knuckle explosions are truly missed. Human contact gives a non-verbal sense of worth, and I love to reassure children that they are well worth the world and everything in it!" He's also looking forward to getting back to in-person worship at his church. He misses his worship family and pastor and plans to



hug all of them as well. “Then after all of that, I am going to hug myself. Self-worth and love are always appreciated here in this heart of mine!”

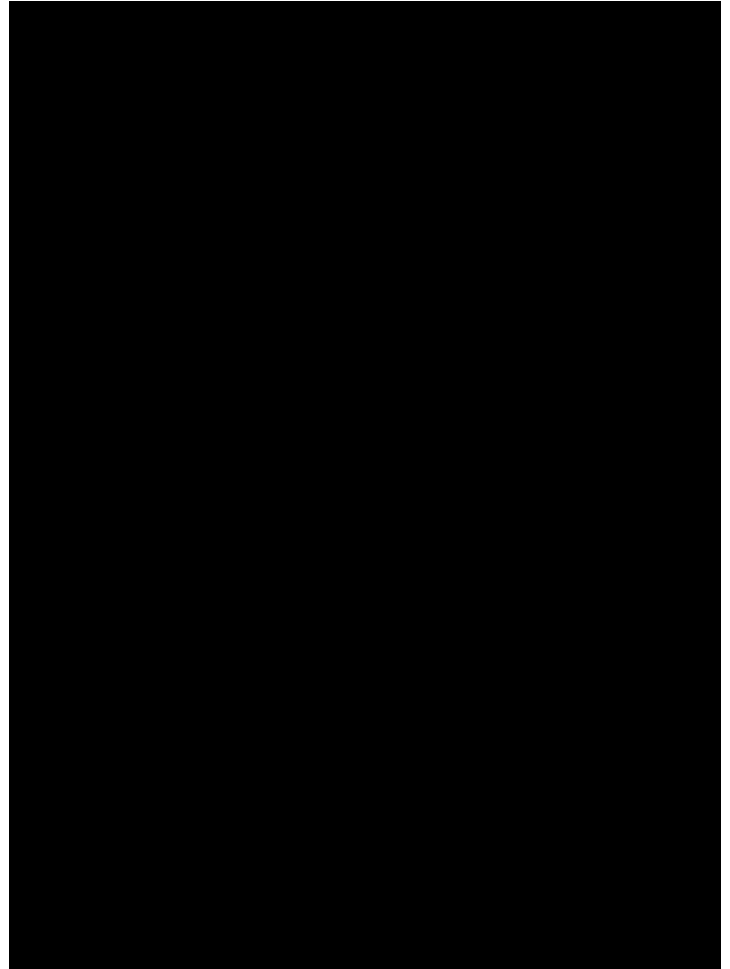
His religion is very important to him, and everything he does he does, in the name of the Lord. “I salute His mercy and His grace. I pray the second I wake up and all throughout the day that I get to live in this life, with this wife, and these children on this land.” He has two sayings that help motivate and center him — ***Blessed, Never Stressed*** and ***Stay Ready, Never Have to Get Ready***. “In all things that you do, stay ready. In an instant it all can be taken away. It will change. Never get too comfortable. So stay ready for all the changes that may come your way.



Blessed never stressed reminds me daily that all I need is to push forward. Carry the light! I was given the day so I am blessed and will be glad in it. What can I change? When the storm comes, it is here. It shall pass. Stress the inevitable? Seems to me like a waste of good time. Who wants that for themselves? Not me, so stress no more! Life is for living, laughing, and loving.”

His family is a special part of those blessings. He met his wife, Colleen, during the summer of 2000, when he took a summer job at the Union College bookstore. They remember the story of who came on to who first differently, but either way, they certainly caught each other’s attention. He loved that she was feisty, unabashed, and direct—everything he liked in a woman. “I did the only good thing for myself that would change my life forever. She worked out perfectly for me. Winning!”

Colleen is now the Lead Bookstore Purchaser at Union, as well as a waitress at John Richettello’s Restaurant. In her spare time, she enjoys baking and gardening. They have two children—Dahvion (16) and DeAngelo (12). Dahvion is a freshman at Albany Academy and a fantastic athlete, participating in relays, high jump, triple jump, basketball, and football. He is hoping to play professional sports while working to





create a career in forensic studies. He is also an ambassador in the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternities Leadership Program.

DeAngelo is a sixth-grade student at Van Antwerp. He is a loquacious, witty, and talented young man with a kindred heart that loves electronics, telling jokes, singing, and is an aspiring actor. "When days are tiring, long, and you just need a hug to get you back in the game, that's what DeAngelo does all so very well," says Devon.

In fact, DeAngelo is the reason their family ended up in Niskayuna. They were living in an apartment in Schenectady when he burst into the world six months premature, spending the first three months of his life in the hospital while the family leaned on the Ronald McDonald House for support. House hunting had come to a halt. "Life became vividly real, fast, but he was alive and kicking, fighting, and clawing to stay each day, every hour from minute to minute, second to second," says Devon. "Holding onto every breath through every tube inserted into a 2lb, 10oz body. He is a blessing." Once things settled, they knew they wanted to stay in Niskayuna and eventually found their home.

Their household is a fun and competitive place, where they



all entertain in their own style and enjoy friendly family competition during game time. But they all have that passion to help others, and Devon revels in the chance to be a father that is there for his children. He enjoys being part of such a wonderful community and is deeply grateful to every member. "The Niskayuna experience is an all-in experience," he says. "Go all in, if you're hesitant, reach out, let's go all in together! The only thing U-n-I have in common is commUnItly!"

In the meantime, he is focusing on his business and how he can expand his offerings to better serve his community. This year they are adding a Boxercise class with a coach who will offer a professional look at boxing as an exercise. Devon is also looking to expand their educational offerings and is providing science and math fairs for students to explore both the subjects and the local campuses where they are held.

Devon wants to continue sharing himself as much as possible. He wants to be a positive role model for his students and watch as they grow and evolve and eventually become community parents as well. He knows how



important mentors can be in a child's life. Participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program himself starting at 12 years old, he was paired with mentor Alvin Gamble, and remains close to him to this day. "Alvin has been through every single moment. I am the epitome of his persistence. What the world gets from me, comes directly from my experiences with Alvin, my mentor and Colonie Council Member. He has created and instilled in me today, what Niskayuna's community benefits from as citizens. I pray I make him proud. I know I do. As I receive thank you cards from parents and athletes alike, they're not saying thank you to me, they're saying thank you to Alvin and my mother, Diana, for the time they invested in me."

He continues to work every day to spread the light and love and to make them proud.