

Distinguished Gentlemen Visit the Big Apple

For Charles Smith, Rome City Schools' educator and champion for the community he calls home, his job does not end when the last school bell rings. Smith, known to most as "Coach Charles," has taken the lead in setting a positive example for young men in his care. Smith is the head coach for the Rome Middle School's football teams, but he is so much more to the parents and students he serves.

He and his Distinguished Gentlemen (a group of young men who learn appropriate social skills, serve their community when called and is based at Anna K. Davie Elementary) decided to see a little more of this great country. Smith has found a way for them all to broaden their horizons with the help of a few generous community partners.

"I wanted to provide an example of what being a gentleman was. I wanted the younger guys to know what it looked like, how it sounded and what was expected when we use the word gentleman," said Smith. "Part of relating in a positive way to the world around us is being exposed to it, so we decided to raise money and fly our young men to New York City."

Smith went on to say that many of his students had never been on a plane or walked through an airport. The looks on their faces when they took off and landed, when they stood next to a skyscraper in Downtown Manhattan and when they tasted food from a popular soul food eatery in Harlem was a gift he will always treasure.

"They were so excited to see many of the things they had only realized on television. I wanted to put them next to the Statue of Liberty and let them know there is a great big world out there," he smiled. "If we provide them with the proper tools needed to succeed, they can hopefully thrive in these environments. I'm all about exposing our younger generation to as much as I possibly can, because I want them to see what success looks like."

Smith and the Distinguished Gentlemen were able to raise every single cent needed for the trip.

"We have been really blessed to have great businesses and great stakeholders in our community who see our vision and want to help," said Smith. "And our faculty with Anna K. Davie and Rome City Schools are great at supporting what we hope to accomplish for our children."

