



reaching for NEW HEIGHTS

DisneyAspire

by TYLER MCNULTY

Nearly one year ago, The Walt Disney Company launched a groundbreaking, education investment program, Disney Aspire, which allows eligible hourly Cast Members and employees the opportunity to go back to school to fulfill their educational and career dreams. The best part: The Walt Disney Company pays 100 percent of the tuition upfront at network schools for Cast to earn their high school diploma, enhance their English or Spanish language skills, go back to college for an undergraduate or master's degree, or even learn a trade.

Jamal Ward, a cook at The Wave ... of American Flavors at Disney's Contemporary Resort, learned about Disney

Aspire by browsing through the HUB, but didn't consider participating at first. "My younger brother called me that night, and I told him about the program," Jamal said. "He was actually the one who convinced me to enroll." Jamal quickly enrolled and was on his way to earning his high school diploma. Originally, Jamal was supposed to graduate in 2020, but, with some tough love and encouragement from his brother, Jamal graduated within four months.

On a recent resort visit, Disney Parks Western Region President Catherine Powell and Walt Disney World Resort President George A. Kalogridis met with Jamal at his workplace and congratulated him on his success. With his

return to school, Jamal hopes to become an inspiration to his young kids. "If I can go back at my age and do it, they definitely can," he said.

In addition to online courses and flexible class schedules available through Disney Aspire, Cast and employees can enroll in programs they are interested in regardless of if they are directly related to their role.

Even though he loves his job at Disney's Contemporary Resort, Jamal's true passion is law enforcement. And, while his journey in Disney Aspire is still young, Jamal is already looking forward to the future. "Disney Aspire has opened up so many doors for me, and I'm so grateful for this amazing program."



Learn more about how to put your dreams within reach at [Aspire.Disney.com](https://aspire.disney.com).