

Inside Alumni Relations BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

2 FRIENDS: SEAN ROBERTSON

Sean Robertson grew up in Petersburg, VA with his single mom and attended Petersburg County Public Schools K-12. During school, he met one of his best friends, Samuel Parham, who would later become the Mayor of Petersburg. Robinson remembers, "I knew Sam from Stuart Elementary School. His mom was a teacher there, and mine was a secretary. After about 35 years of friendship, we're still friends."

Robertson decided to attend RBC because of a program called Project Opportunity Group that gave students a stipend to take three core classes the summer after graduating high school. When he heard that his friend, Mayor Parham, was also planning to attend RBC, they planned their courses so that they could ride together. "I didn't have a car, but I was a shotgun driver," says Robinson. "My mom took care of Sam's gas in exchange for giving me a ride to classes."

"Starting at Bland instead of a four-year was the best thing that ever happened to us. The professors worked with us to help us do well,

and Sam and I motivated each other." The two friends only had a handful of classes together, but they would meet during lunch and hang out. They desired to bring the lively campus closer together and started a club called Multicultural Alliance.

When graduation came in May of '96, the graduates were sad to leave their beloved college, which was a holding place for so many good memories. "Statesman gym was packed with people that day. Once the ceremony ended, Sam was the first person I sought out after my family. We both exclaimed, 'We did it!'" shares Robinson.

Robertson and Mayor Parham went separate ways for the first time since they met. Their friendship no longer relied on having a school in common but thrived nonetheless. Mayor Parham went to Virginia Commonwealth University, and Robertson studied at Virginia State University, becoming a PA Announcer for the women's basketball team and later an intern and employee for the campus radio station.

After six years at VSU's radio station and working full-time

as the station's Sports Director, another director at the station put a word in for Robinson at CBS 6 News in Richmond. He says, "I received a call from the Channel 6 Sports Director offering me a freelance position. I would do weekend shoots when their weekend person wanted time off, but when that person left, they asked me to be the Weekend Sports Anchor."

"Even when Sam and I were kids, I wanted to work in sports broadcasting. Now, if you had told me in high school that Sam would be the Mayor of Petersburg, I wouldn't have believed you. Looking back, our conversations about sports and the city propelled us toward our careers," comments Robinson.

Studying at RBC was a massive step toward success for the two friends. "Coming to RBC prepares students for a four-year degree. You can be your own person, live in the dorms, and participate in extracurricular activities," recognizes Robertson. "I will never forget my RBC friends and how much the faculty cared. I recently spoke to my English professor, Miss Floyd, and she told me how proud she is of me. She helped me to become a better writer and person."

Robertson and Mayor Parham began as elementary school buds bonded by video games. They continue as professionals and brothers, celebrating more than 35 years of friendship.

