Cameron Smith is a well-dressed, articulate 23-year-old business owner. One would never guess he was incarcerated for 3 of his teenage years.

He spent an entire year in juvenile detention before coming to DYS. He explained, “My mom happened to meet Chaplain Joe Dunlap at a church in Grove City. He came and saw me in detention before I ever arrived at (the former) Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility.” That was the start of a positive relationship that continues to impact Cameron’s life.

“Before I had a negative outlook,” Cameron said. “I had to learn patience and grow to find myself.”

After a time of orientation at Scioto, Cameron spent his remaining time at Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. He credits Guidance Counselor Kurt Smith with helping him stay on track academically. Cameron was able to gain work experience within the facility and fondly recalls working for the late Larry Goodman and Tamara Wynn. Once he left DYS, he entered his senior year at Davidson High School, playing football and taking advantage of a work-study program before graduating.
Cameron faced a variety of challenges once released. Juvenile Parole Officer Frankie Tatum was the “dad” Cameron never had. He explained, “Frankie gave me sound advice, not just what I wanted to hear. He was there for me - he would even answer his phone in the middle of the night.”

Marrying young, Cameron had a son in 2013. “It’s awesome to know that my son will never know the old me,” Cameron said. “It means a lot to me being a father. He keeps me going and wanting to do the right thing. I have to be accountable and give the best of me.”

Also in 2013, Cameron began working alongside the owner of a carpet cleaning business, which he assumed ownership of in 2014. Today Cameron’s business, Boom Cleaning Steaming, specializes in on-site auto detailing. The young entrepreneur also owns a food truck called Manna Banana, featuring chocolate-covered bananas.

Today Cameron gives back to youth at Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility (CJCF) every Sunday through a ministry with James McCoy, another mentor in Cameron’s life. “We want to show the youth the love of God and help them find internal freedom,” Cameron said.

“Because he’s been in their shoes, our youth tune into what Cameron has to say,” said Stephen Huffman, CJCF Superintendent. “I appreciate him paying it forward by supporting our youth.”