

# “Turn 2” Healthy Lifestyles

## An Interview with Sharlee Jeter, President, Turn 2 Foundation

**EDITORS' NOTE** Sharlee Jeter is President of the Turn 2 Foundation, a nonprofit established by Derek Jeter in 1996 to help young people reach their full potential by fostering leadership development, academic achievement, healthy lifestyles and social change. Since she assumed leadership of Turn 2 in 2010, Sharlee has taken the Foundation to new heights, elevating its profile across the country, raising substantial funds to strengthen its programs, and changing the lives of hundreds



Sharlee Jeter

of youth, as demonstrated by its signature Jeter's Leaders initiative. For 15 consecutive years, 100 percent of high school students have graduated from the Jeter's Leaders program and attended college. Over the years, hundreds of high school students have participated in Turn 2's internship initiative, which has connected Jeter's Leaders with paid internships at more than 50 world-class organizations. In 2017, Turn 2 permanently endowed its fourth college scholarship, the UNCF/Sharlee Jeter Scholarship, which is awarded annually to a Jeter's Leaders graduate to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). In 2021, Sharlee was recognized as one of Crain's New York Business' Notable Black Leaders and Executives for her unwavering commitment to advancing equality and creating positive change. In addition to her role at Turn 2, Sharlee is Vice President of Strategy and Development for Jeter Ventures, which encompasses Derek's full portfolio of business operations. She also oversees the children and adult divisions of Jeter Publishing, an imprint of Simon & Schuster launched in 2013 that has produced several New York Times Bestsellers, including *The Contract*, its follow-up, *Hit & Miss*, and *Change Up*. Sharlee is co-author of a powerful book with Dr. Sampson Davis titled, *The STUFF: Unlock Your Power to Overcome Challenges, Soar and Succeed*. The STUFF was inspired by the authors' own personal challenges and is intended to empower readers to recognize their own strength and potential to succeed. Sharlee began her involvement with the Turn 2 Foundation in 1996 as a high school volunteer. At the age of 18, she was named to the Board of Directors. In 2002, she joined the Foundation full-time as Program Director, developing a number of successful initiatives, including a partnership with The St. Joseph's School for the Deaf in the Bronx that led to the integration of the

deaf into many Turn 2 programs and events in New York and Michigan. She was promoted to Director of Development in 2004, and in 2007, she was named Vice President. Born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Sharlee graduated in 1997 from Kalamazoo Central High School and received a BS degree in mathematics in 2001 from Spelman College in Atlanta.

**FOUNDATION BRIEF** Since its launch in December 1996, the Turn 2 Foundation ([turn2foundation.org](http://turn2foundation.org)) has created

and supported programs and activities that motivate young people to turn away from drugs and alcohol and “Turn 2” healthy lifestyles. Through various specialized programs and events, the Foundation works with youth in New York City, West Michigan and Tampa, empowering them to reach their full potential. Its signature Jeter's Leaders initiative is a four-year leadership development program that fosters academic achievement, positive behavior and social change among high school students. During its 26-year history, Turn 2 has given back more than \$35 million, funding its signature programs as well as organizations that support its mission.

### Will you highlight the history of the Turn 2 Foundation and how you define its mission?

In 1996, Derek and our father created the Turn 2 Foundation to motivate young people to turn away from drugs and alcohol and turn to healthy lifestyles. More than two decades later, Turn 2 continues to build on that legacy by helping countless youth through specialized programs designed to foster leadership development, academic excellence, positive behavior and social change.

### Will you provide an overview of the work of the Foundation and its initiatives?

Each of our initiatives work to help young people overcome challenges, rise above negative influences, lead healthy lifestyles and ultimately achieve their utmost potential. We have various programs that are tailored to meet the everchanging needs of young people, including the Jeter's Leaders, Turn 2 Us, the Derek Jeter Center at Phoenix House, and more.

Our signature initiative is the Jeter's Leaders program – a four-year leadership development program that fosters academic achievement,

positive behavior and social change among high school students in New York and West Michigan who serve as ambassadors for Derek and Turn 2 in their communities. The Jeter's Leaders are inducted as incoming freshmen and remain in the program throughout all four years of high school. This is a highly selective program that transforms these students, who are role models in their communities, into powerful agents of social change.

Our elementary school-based mental health initiative for New York City students, Turn 2 Us, was created in partnership with NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital in 2001. In the classroom, Turn 2 Us offers students mindfulness exercises, anti-bullying education, healthy lifestyle practices that promote mental well-being and academic success, and more. The program also provides staff development workshops for teachers, administrators, and other school staff, and it helps parents and caregivers by increasing awareness in households through tailored workshops.

As a foundation that's rooted in motivating young people to turn away from drugs and alcohol, Turn 2 also partners with Phoenix House in Florida to provide critical resources and support to teens struggling with substance abuse. Since its founding in 2008, the Derek Jeter Center has helped thousands of youth overcome struggles with addiction. In 2017, Turn 2 and Phoenix House unveiled a newly renovated Derek Jeter Center, which enabled the facility to double its treatment capacity. Our Foundation also presented a donation of \$150,000, surpassing \$1 million in contributions from Turn 2 to Phoenix House since the center's inception.

### What has made the Jeter's Leaders program so effective and how has this signature program of the Foundation evolved?

The Jeter's Leaders work on assignments and projects aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles, serving their communities, mentoring, achieving academically and furthering their professional development. The program is so impactful because we're able to provide high school students with enriching opportunities they may not experience elsewhere, like college tours, paid internships, volunteer initiatives, and more. Through our Social Change Projects and Leadership Conferences, these students are also able to dive into communities across the country and work together to create positive change.

***“My father and I began the Turn 2 Foundation during my rookie season with the New York Yankees, and the impact we’ve had on thousands of youth across the country since then has far exceeded my dreams.”***

**Derek Jeter, Co-Founder, Turn 2 Foundation**

Our Jeter’s Leaders understand the importance of their education, setting goals for themselves, and serving as role models to those around them. With each class, we witness a remarkable transformation – these students grow personally and academically, graduate high school and go on to pursue their dreams in college. Over the years, we’ve evolved our program to continuously meet the everchanging

needs of young people, including during the pandemic. We knew we needed to transition our programming to address the current challenges these young people were facing and ensure they were fully supported during these scary and uncertain times.

**How did the Foundation adapt the way it works to address the challenges caused by the pandemic?**

Throughout the pandemic, young people have been juggling continuous transitions between in-person and remote learning, navigating periods of social distancing and isolation, and experiencing ongoing feelings of uncertainty that have been causing a significant strain on their mental well-being. Through our programs, we have been providing resources and guidance to help our students remain active, motivated to learn and, ultimately, continue leading healthy lifestyles. We’ve held virtual graduation ceremonies for our senior Jeter’s Leaders, ongoing virtual career panels where Leaders gain valuable professional advice from executives in various industries, online discussions with Jeter’s Leaders alumni, and more.

We’ve also continued to provide our Jeter’s Leaders with opportunities to give back to those around them. In August 2021, we held our Social Change Project, where our New York Jeter’s Leaders volunteered at the Community League of the Heights to help make a difference in the Washington Heights community. On that same day, our Jeter’s Leaders in Kalamazoo, Michigan, volunteered at Bronson Methodist Hospital to beautify the grounds.

Our mental health promotion program – Turn 2 Us – has also been providing various services to promote mental wellness among young people in New York City elementary schools. At the height of the pandemic, Turn 2 Us transitioned its school-based programming to take place virtually and facilitated several workshops focused on self-care techniques and boosting overall well-being in young people, with topics including stress management, the impact of social media and screen time, self-care and more. Additionally, with support from our Jeter’s Leaders program, we modified Turn 2 Us’ in-person mentorship program by providing virtual services to students.

Additionally, our partner Phoenix House continued to serve Hillsborough County in Florida via telehealth services throughout the pandemic. This year, we’re looking forward to awarding the Derek Jeter Hillsborough Education Scholarship, which is one of two annual scholarships we administer to graduates of the Derek Jeter Center at Phoenix House.

The past two years have demonstrated that Turn 2’s mission is more important than ever before. It’s crucial that young people continue



*Derek and Sharlee Jeter on the runway at the Palm Beach Invitational*

***“Sharlee has truly taken the Foundation to new heights as president, and I’m so proud to work with her to grow Turn 2.”***

**Derek Jeter**

to have access to support and guidance, especially during this critical time in their lives as they plan for their future.

**How critical are metrics to measure the impact of the Foundation’s work?**

At Turn 2, we are closely monitoring our success rates in order to determine how we can strengthen our various programs and initiatives, and better meet the needs of young people. On an ongoing basis we measure the number of hours that are devoted to community service, the number of young people we are reaching, the funds we are receiving through events and donations, the number of partnerships we secure for our internship program and career webinars, and more. Additionally, several years ago, we invested in a rigorous evaluation system that measures the success of our Jeter’s Leaders program. This is an important tool that informs our approach for this program year after year. One statistic I’m especially proud of is our high school graduation rate. Despite challenges brought on by the pandemic, 100 percent of our Jeter’s Leaders graduated high school and were accepted into college in 2021 – a graduation rate we have held for the past 15 consecutive years.

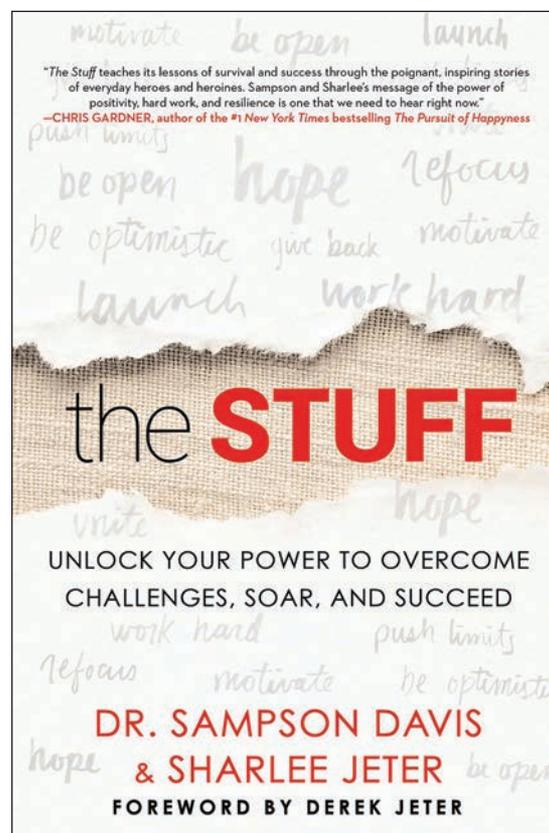
**Will you discuss Derek’s passion and commitment for the work of the Foundation and how deeply engaged he is in its efforts?**

During Derek’s rookie season with the New York Yankees in 1996, he knew he wanted to help other young people recognize and accomplish dreams of their own, so he and our father set out to create a foundation that would motivate youth to rise above negative influences, set goals for themselves and reach their full potential. Turn 2 was born that year, and its mission is a reflection of the values our entire family shares. Derek continues to be deeply involved in the Foundation, and it has been really special to work alongside my brother to create positive change. In addition to our current programming, Derek and I are very focused on how we can continue to deepen our impact and build on Turn 2’s legacy to serve more young people well into the future.

**Did you always know that you had a passion for this type of work and what makes the work so special for you?**

I have been passionate about creating meaningful change from a very young age and was inspired by my parents. When we were growing up, our father, who was a drug

and alcohol abuse counselor, and our mother instilled in Derek and me the importance of hard work, education and community service. These principles guided us both through our professional and personal endeavors and are what laid the groundwork for the Turn 2 Foundation.



Turn 2 started as a small family foundation and grew into something so incredible that has truly changed the lives of hundreds of young people – and I am so proud of the profound impact we’ve been able to have. The youth we serve become passionate about Turn 2’s values, and it’s amazing to watch them light up during our Leadership Conferences and service projects. They know they can make a real difference in their communities and beyond, and that the sky is the limit for their future – seeing these changes in them is what inspires me every day.

**What interested you in writing the book, *The STUFF: Unlock Your Power to Overcome Challenges, Soar, and Succeed*, and what were the key messages you wanted to convey in the book?**

While preparing for my future career path and earning my degree at Spelman College, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Despite the difficult battle ahead, I was determined to ensure this wasn’t going to stand in my way of graduating on time and pursuing my dreams. I traveled back-and-forth between my dorm room and Manhattan to receive treatment and continued with my studies. Through strength, determination, courage and an outstanding support system, I earned my college degree and overcame cancer. The perspectives and lessons I gained during that difficult period of my life have guided me through challenges I’ve faced throughout my career.

*The STUFF* was inspired by the challenges both Dr. Sampson Davis and I faced in our lives. We came up with the idea to share stories of perseverance, and together, co-authored *The STUFF*. In addition to our journeys, this book features the powerful stories of everyday individuals who faced misfortune but found ways to thrive. Our hope is that the power of positivity and hard work will empower readers, particularly youth, to recognize their potential and ability to overcome challenges.

**As you look at the impact that the Turn 2 Foundation has made in the lives of youth, do you take moments to reflect and appreciate what the Foundation has accomplished or are you always looking at what is next?**

It makes me so proud to reflect on the impact we have had over the past 26 years. Since Turn 2 was created, we’ve implemented impactful Social Change Projects that have helped to improve communities throughout the U.S.; we’ve brought together hundreds of youth leaders from across the country for powerful discussions during our Leadership Conferences about how to overcome issues adolescents are facing; our programs have provided hundreds of high school students with enriching experiences and scholarships that enabled them to pursue their dreams in college; we’ve given back over \$35 million to support our programs as well as other organizations that share our mission; and much more.

We’re certainly not slowing down, and I’m inspired every day to continue working alongside our outstanding team to strengthen our programs and deepen our impact in the years to come. ●