

2012 AAGHOF Pioneer of the Year Award

Jesse James Parker



Jesse J. Parker was born in March of 1954 to Maude and Ben Parker, sharecroppers living on a farm in Homeville, VA. He was the 10th of 12 children. Jesse lost his right leg to bone cancer at the age of 16 after showing promising athletic potential. Today, he is the survivor of four separate cancers, treated by surgery (amputation), chemotherapy and radiation.

Having to turn from athletics to academics was not difficult for Jesse. He graduated with honors from Middlesex Community College of Middletown, CT in 1975. He received his Bachelor of Science degree cum laude from the University of New Haven in 1977. While employed full-time as a business consultant and underwriter at Connecticut General Life Insurance Company,

Jesse attended classes evenings and weekends and received his Master of Business Administration degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Hartford Graduate Center in 1983.

After a 23-year career as an investments and insurance professional, with tours as management consultant, life and health underwriter, manager of recruitment and selection of financial planners, financial planning, product management and group representative, Jesse became an independent insurance broker specializing in employee benefits, executive benefits, and retirement plans. Currently, he is Vice President of Health and Wellness at Independent Benefit Services located in Rockville, MD. During his entire professional career, Jesse has remained very involved in his community through sports and social/political activism, holding leadership positions several organizations serving the disabled and mentoring communities. He is currently a member in good standing and active member of the choir at Mount Vernon Baptist Church located in Chrystal City, VA. .

Jesse played and coached wheelchair basketball and participated in wheelchair road racing for well over 25 years. He has also developed a considerable passion for golf. He has played the game for 10 years and frequently shoots below 100. In his spare time, Jesse enjoys reading, playing golf and participating in programs designed to positively motivate youth who are in school and those who are incarcerated. Much of his time is also spent visiting recently disabled individuals to motivate them and encourage them to "get back into life."

He currently serves as Chairman of Health and Wellness with The 100 Black Men of Greater Washington, DC. The Health and Wellness Committee focuses on educating young people and their families about the numerous health issues that impact African Americans while promoting healthy lifestyles as one of the key pillars for a successful life. His committee is spearheading work to address the youth obesity epidemic so rampant in our community. Called Youth Movement, the program combines nutrition and fitness education for middle school youth to further that objective. He encourages youth to share their new knowledge with peers, siblings and parents alike. The program currently works with 300 middle school students and their parents involving well-credentialed nutritionists, chefs, coaches and fitness instructors.

Brother Parker is a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. since 1977. He has served as the First District KRS for several years.

Jesse is married to the lovely Connie Parker and has three children; daughters Alisha and Amber, and son Mason. He has five grandchildren; Briona, Raven, Indigo, Kaden and Cadence.