

Air Force Veteran Entrepreneur Sets Example for His Community

A sense of service is at the core of Jarriel Brown, a Detroit native and disabled veteran whose company, Burst of Life, makes compostable cutlery now carried at our Rivertown and Woodward markets in Detroit and Royal Oak.

He started on the pathway to entrepreneurship in 2020 after he began attending his church, Global Empowerment Ministries, which mentors new entrepreneurs. Jarriel had previously served 10 years in the Air Force and was looking for an opportunity to make a difference.

“For me, entrepreneurship is a way to create jobs and opportunities, and to make the world a better place for others,” he said.

His product is inspired by his time in the Air Force when he ate many meals with disposable cutlery.

“We would rush to eat our food before our utensils broke or melted,” Jarriel said. “I had this idea of making utensils that were more durable and heat resistant. I picked plant-based so they wouldn’t be harmful to the environment. It turned out to be the perfect product.”

Once his product was created and ready for retail, Meijer became his first partner. He’s proud to work with a company like Meijer that continues to support the small business community.

“The amount of community camaraderie I’ve received at Meijer has just been astounding honestly, even in my first year of being a supplier,” he said. “Meijer really helped me gain an understanding of where I’m going and what I’m doing here.”

He became involved in the Meijer Supplier Inclusion program after accepting an invitation to an event at the [Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give](#). There, he met our team members and learned about our Meijer Grow Academy, which helps diverse businesses with brand strategy, marketing, product packaging, operating processes, and distribution capabilities, among other topics.

“They teach us the ins and outs of how to do well with Meijer,” Jarriel said. “We’ve met other successful suppliers, who talk to us during the meetings. It’s been a great experience.”

Jarriel is obtaining his National Minority Supplier Development Council certification. His small business, Burst of Life, was certified as a service-disabled veteran-owned business through the Small Business Administration.

As an advocate for local social justice, Jarriel works closely within his community, assisting the formerly incarcerated with various mentorship opportunities, including job guidance, education and housing.

He also inspires others to follow his path into entrepreneurship, including his mother and his best friend who are proud supporters of his journey. In addition to his own company’s growth, Jarriel helps others get their products on Meijer shelves by showing them the process for applying.

“There are ways to connect them with resources that I’ve been blessed with and to empower them with the opportunities I’ve been given,” Jarriel said. “I’ve seen people who have walked away from dangerous situations because they really wanted to make a change in their lives.”

We are grateful to partner with Jarriel in his quest to not only bring effective products to market, but also, support his community.

Additional assets available online: [Photos](#)⁽¹⁾

<https://stage.mediaroom.com/meijersocial/2024-05-07-Air-Force-Veteran-Entrepreneur-Sets-Example-for-His-Community>