

# I champion Albany public schools because...

## **The opportunity:**

"I was in Albany public schools all the way, from Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology, to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy and on to Albany High. I remember being happy that I was able to learn about the arts and do theater all the way through. I performed in my first play in fourth grade.

"I had lot of teachers who weren't all about the books. Even though theater is my main focus, you still need to know something else. And I learned a lot about life situations. With them, it was more about applying what you were learning to your life. And they stressed that there are always opportunities if you look hard enough and there's always at least one person that will help you do what you want to do, and you just have to work hard for it and find them. It's all about putting yourself out there. If you want the opportunity, you'll find it.

"My teachers definitely had some words of wisdom. They pushed but were not pushy. They always let you know what was possible, but that if you don't go for it, then it's not going to happen. When you're in high school, you're still not technically an adult, but you kind of have an idea of the real world and what could be possible. I feel like high school is the place where you start putting the wheels in motion. My teachers always emphasized the idea of what could be, and if I wanted it hard enough, then it could happen. It definitely worked."

## **The achievement:**

"After I graduated from Albany High in 2006, I went to Pace University in New York City to major in musical theater. In the middle of my sophomore year, I was cast in the role of Seaweed J. Stubbs in the touring production of 'Hairspray,' so I took a leave of absence. I saw 'Hairspray' for the first time with the Albany High Drama Club in 2002 and back then I thought to myself, 'I have to be in that show,' and now I am. What's even funnier is that when I was in China with the tour (in 2008) I was using the Chinese I took in high school. I never thought I would go to China. When I registered for it, I thought a Chinese class would be fun, but now that I'm here, I'm remembering the things from the class.

"When I was at Albany High, I think I was striving to prove the outside world wrong. There was so much negative attention focused on what was going on with the schools and the kids that went there. My friends and I didn't see it that way. The main thing that made us work harder and do



**Donell James Foreman, Albany High School, Class of 2006**  
**Actor, national touring production of "Hairspray"**

better was to prove that people can achieve things  
and do good things and not succumb to the  
pressure of what everyone else thinks is the  
problem."

**Donell James Foreman recently performed in the national tour of "Hairspray" as Seaweed J. Stubbs. He is pursuing a degree in musical theater from Pace University in New York City. In the past he has performed with the New York State Theatre Institute ("1776"), Schenectady Light Opera ("Songs for a New World") and a wide variety of musicals in high school.**