



CHICAGO MENTOR WORKING TO RAISE \$25,000 FOR YOUTH CENTER



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CHICAGO — He's a former Marine, business owner and now a mentor. This local fitness trainer is helping inner-city youth get their futures in shape.

Sean Armstead says he would not be where he is today if not for his mother and the presence of role models in his life.

"She was right," says Armstead. "All the boys she did not want to me to play with when I was little are either dead, incarcerated or highly ineffective."

The owner of the Phenomenal Fitness Gym in the South Loop, Armstead says he is grateful to those who have supported him throughout the years and feels a responsibility to do the same for others.

"The thing that I try to focus on is: It's my duty, my honor and my privilege to do it and I'd rather be a part of the solution than part of the problem," says Armstead.

He has also been a board member with the Chicago All Stars Project and a volunteer since 2015. The nonprofit works with inner-city youth through performance and partnering them with adults in the corporate world.

Every year, Phenomenal Fitness sponsors summer interns for eight weeks, giving Armstead the opportunity to teach them life lessons along with the sometimes harsh realities of owning a business.

"The entrepreneurial journey: The pitfalls, the triumphs and disasters," says Armstead. "I don't try to put a perfect, well-to-do front with them."

The internship is part of All Stars's development school for youth programs geared toward young adults. It includes resume writing, networking and interviewing skills.

"What are the things you should say, what are the things you should not say? What's the attire?" Armstead explains.

In 2018, Sean Armstead was honored by the All Stars Project for dedication to the youngsters and the organization.

"He is truly committed to bringing development, growth and bringing opportunities and success to our city's young people and I really admire him for that and he's become a friend," says David Cherry, a city leader of the All Stars Project.

A former marine and champion of the 2013 Chicago Golden Gloves, Armstead has always been up for a fitness challenge. This summer the 56-year-old will set the weights aside and lace up his running shoes for a 155-mile, 7-day ultra marathon in Tibet. All in an effort to raise money for a new All Star youth center.

"This is something that's going to be super challenging for me, but I get to think not about myself I get to think about the good we're trying to do for young people outside myself and that makes it super worthwhile."

Armstead has set a goal to raise \$25,000 for the All Stars Project before the big race in June.