

It's undeniable - the camera loves Hanna Academy junior Darrell F., whether it's a video or photo shoot, capturing events, programs, or day-to-day happenings at the Academy; somehow, Darrell usually finds himself well-documented.



Maybe that's because he's in the right place at the right time, but more likely because he's friendly, helpful, interesting, and interested. In a lot of things.

Recently, while in line at the cafeteria, Darrell, in passing, remarked to a staff member, "I noticed the new Land Rover. Nice." Darrell is a true car enthusiast who has an eye for pretty cars on campus and can talk in detail about his current favorite models and legendary classics. His penchant for automobiles is a family trait. His grandfather owned a car repair shop, and his dad grew up immersed in the culture of mechanics, bodywork, and gearheads.

A Utah native, Darrell arrived at Hanna at the start of his freshmen year two and a half years ago. As a young boy, he lived with his parents and two older sisters in a small town outside Salt Lake City. Drugs and alcohol played a significant role in his and his sibling's upbringing - the family moved often, looking for jobs that could pay the rent and

accommodate their lifestyle. Addiction took over, and neglect soon ensued; at the age of about seven, the children's grandmother intervened, and Darrell and his sisters were removed from his parent's custody,

Darrell and his sisters stayed with relatives for several years until they were all adopted into one family. Things were OK at first, but soon Darrell began to experience some disconnect with his adoptive mom, who claimed that she 'didn't know how to raise teenage boys,' as she had only sisters herself and no biological sons of her own.

"It was rough for me," Darrell remembers. "She didn't know how to deal with my adoptive dad either. I had a hard time; she couldn't handle me. Eventually, I was fending for myself again and talked to enough people to get removed. That's when I came to Hanna."

Looking back on his time here, Darrell has most enjoyed the variety of animals on campus. From therapy dogs in the classroom to working with the



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chickens and hens in the barn to raising and showing lambs with the Academy's former Agriculture/Health program, he has also enjoyed helping out on campus by performing various maintenance jobs to earn pocket money.

Darrell's grades are "good" - he can procrastinate with writing assignments, but once he's in the right mindset, he can knock off English essays "relatively easily." "I like to do all the math problems in my head," he says, "which never fails to annoy Mr. Campos (Hanna Academy's math instructor). But it's strange; I can develop new steps to solve math problems that are different from how they normally work out. Then I'm teaching Campos something new; kind of fun."

Darrell's dream is to save enough money to re-open his grandpa's old mechanic shop in Utah, which is currently boarded up. "It's in a really cool spot," he says. "I would like to buy it and start a new business there before it's torn down. But first, I need to go to school for mechanics and learn about business, too."

If Darrell could share a meal with anyone, dead or alive, he would dine with Ken Block, an American professional rally driver with the Hoonigan Racing Division and co-founder of DC Shoes, who died in a snowmobile accident in January 2023. "He was a big deal in the car community," he says. "Or Elon Musk. He became successful very quickly; he could probably give me tips on what I could do if I owned a business."

But for the thrill of a lifetime, Darrell could see himself riding shotgun with Belgium racing car driver Max Verstappen. The Oracle Red Bull Racing champion hits speeds in his Formula 1 car upwards of 220 mph. "I'd have to do some training first to handle the G forces," he says.

Today, Darrell has reconnected with his biological dad and remains close to his sisters and extended family in Utah. In the spring of 2024, Darrell was accepted into the Sonoma Ecology Center's EnviroLeader Internship program.

Hanna Academy educates, prepares, and empowers students with learning and emotional challenges to succeed in school and life by developing their unique and individual talents and gifts. The student driven program develops academic, social, and career skills within a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment.