

TOP PAGE EDGE

samer suleman

IN BLACK JEANS AND A TAN SUEDE JACKET, Samer Suleman strolls through the halls, waving and smiling to everyone he sees. That happy attitude is what seems to draw everyone to him.

But Suleman started high school with a personality strikingly different from what one would see today.

“Prior to my junior year ... I did not do anything. I was just a little timid kid who did not like school. I stayed in my little shell, my comfort zone, and I’d hide up in my room and do nothing,” Suleman said.

Then sophomore year, he started to break out of his shell, getting hired at Culver’s, where he said he learned a few things about socializing.

“I was just working on register all day and interacting with all types of people ... all the mean customers would come and just be rude to you for no reason, no hello, no anything, just be pissed off at you,” he said. “I was like, ‘Wait, if you can do that, that means I can just be whatever I want, to anybody.’ But I didn’t take that as, ‘Oh, I want to be mean to people.’ That’s just, ‘Oh, I can talk to people in whatever way. I don’t have to be shy.’”

With this discovery, Suleman has been trying new school activities he would not have in the past.

“I went to my first football game—ever—and I loved it,” Suleman said. “I was on the field taking pictures. I talked to some football players ... It’s just really cool to be able to try these new things and be in a different environment and meet a lot of people.”

His job and experiences prompted him to grow out of his shell and discover his passion for getting to know people.

“It is just something about stopping someone to chat for small talk or wherever it is that it may be,” he said. “I just like to sit with someone and get to know them for a brief while.”

Suleman joined SSIKED and Truth Squad for the second time to attend the I Make Me World Iowa conference in Des Moines in January.

“Schools go there to compete in a Black History Month competition, where the first place award is \$300 award alongside just shirts and an actual life-size trophy,” he said. “My team finished in second. The other West team finished in third.”

While some students look forward to a laid-back senior year, Suleman shares some insight into his schedule.

“Going into senior year, you heard from a lot of alumni and upperclassmen in general that junior year is the pinnacle point, where you are just super tired of school, you have the most classes and school work and your life is miserable. And then your senior year is like a breeze,” he said. “Well, it’s not ... the stress of extracurriculars, regular class load, standardized tests, college applications, scholarship essays, work, social life. All of that is sort of like overwhelming.”

Despite its hectic aspects, his senior year has created opportunities for some remarkable memories.

“I was so bad when I started [working],” he said, laughing at the memory. “I rung up cheeseburgers with hot fudge. That’s how bad it was. I found a way to put hot fudge on a cheeseburger. They just kicked me off of drive-through and told me to go run food.”

In a roundabout way, those memories, accomplishments and activities all lead back to one thing: Suleman’s decision to get involved in many things.

“My single piece of advice is to go ahead and try new things. As cliché and as corny or whatever as it sounds. Like seriously, coming from a kid who thought everything was lame and not worth his time because he just wanted to justify why he was so shy and not doing anything with his life. Branching out and trying new things just got me to become the best version of myself.”

—By Peyton Brady



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