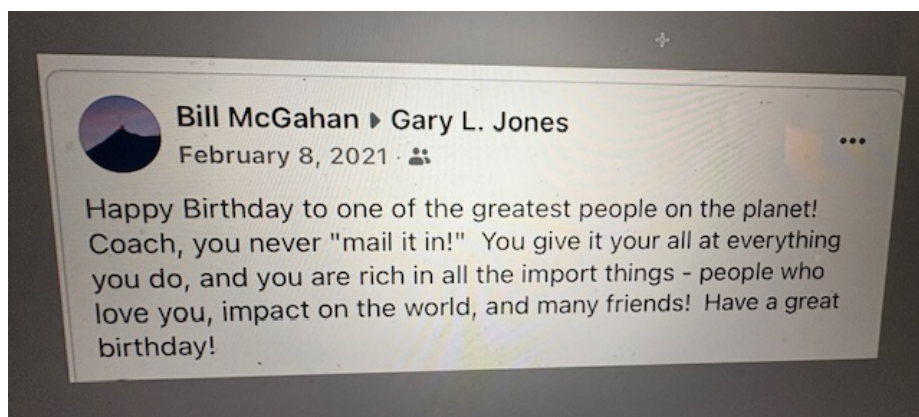


## Thoughts on the Passing of Gary Jones (Founding Board Member of Georgia Works) from our Founder, Bill McGahan

It is with profound sadness that our founding board member Gary Jones was found deceased over the weekend.

This is a massive loss to Gary's family, Georgia Works, Atlanta, Westminster Schools, Sandtown, and for all that knew and loved Gary.

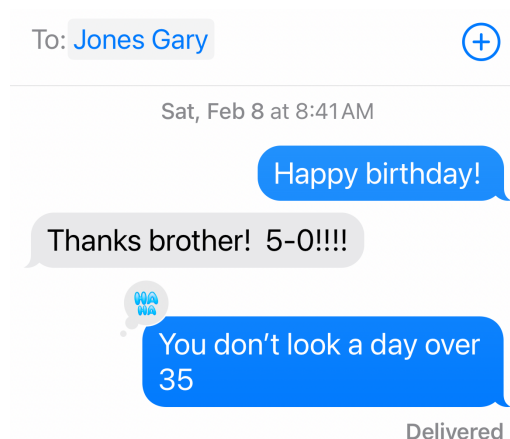
Gary was one of the greatest individuals I have ever known. I was proud to know him over the last 20 years. I spent a lot of time with Gary - I coached 6 seasons of football and basketball with him, ate many a meal with him, had him over to my birthday parties, attended his birthday parties, had endless debates with him about sports, current events and the economy, and I loved him like a brother.



The last time I texted Gary was the morning that he disappeared when I wished him a happy 50th birthday, remarking he didn't look a day over 35. And he didn't. He was a force of nature, with the energy of a person half his age. Gary was a passionate believer in his God, his family and his friends. He truly believed he was blessed in every way, and that every day was a gift to be valued, used with energy and passion, and to be cherished.

In 2013 I had the nutty idea to try to end street homelessness in Atlanta. Many people I spoke with doubted the concept of Georgia Works, but not Gary Jones. I specifically remember calling Gary and asking him for his help with something, and he instantly responded "you've got it!" before I even had the opportunity to tell him about why I was calling. And he responded that way, he said, because thats what friends do.

Gary and I were (obviously) not blood related, but when I spoke to him the day before he went boating on lake Oconee he started the conversation (as he did many conversations) by saying



“I was just thinking about my niece Katie McGahan today.” Katie is my daughter, and Katie, he said, was his niece, since we were brothers.

I witnessed Gary speaking to our Georgia Works community of men on numerous occasions, and each time it went the same way. Gary would stand up in front 75 to 100 men and describe his background of coming from the tough inner-city southern part of Atlanta, how he and his brothers had gone to college and earned their degrees, how he had three children from one woman, and how he spent his time teaching children and coaching athletics at Westminster and coaching back in his old neighborhood. He would tell the men that he was faced with the same temptations that they were faced with, but he made choices that were consistent with his values, and if that they made good choices every day those decisions would compound upon one another and they too could have a life of significance. And after every visit the men would swarm him, with every single of them lining up wanting to shake his hand and have a moment with him, because they too would see his goodness, his godliness, and the clarity of his moral compass.

At every Georgia Works graduation Gary would speak to our graduates and talk about how important it was for them to complete the journey that they were on. He would tell them that he admired their courage to get clean, to try to begin a career, and to dedicate themselves to living their lives the right way. There was no more important job in front of them, Gary would say, than being a father in the lives of their children. And when Gary would end his talk, he would always receive a passionate standing ovation, because the men in the program considered Gary to be one of their own.

Gary will be sorely missed by his children and his family, his co-workers and students, the thousands of people he taught and impacted, the Board and staff of Georgia Works, and the thousands more in the future that will miss his impact of him not being around. He was one of my best friends. I cannot believe he is gone.