

People
HEROES
AMONG US

A LIFE-SAVING PLAY

Jullaion Jones, 19 *Kansas City, Mo.*

With eight minutes left in the game, Jullaion Jones, a junior at DeLaSalle Education Center, trained his eyes on the court; his team was up three points and he wanted to keep the lead. Suddenly a fight among a group of young men erupted in the gym; moments later, gunshots rang out.

As people dashed for the exits and ducked for cover, Jullaion saw 6-year-old Desean Merritt standing on the sidelines, frightened and crying. He flung himself on Desean, pulling the boy to the floor and shielding him as bullets whizzed past; one grazed Jullaion's right shin. "I didn't even think about it," recalls Jullaion. Nearby, a frantic Sean Merritt searched for his son. "When I heard Jullaion calling 'I got him!' I was so relieved," says Merritt, the alternative high school's vice-principal. Four people were shot and sustained injuries; police are investigating the incident.

As for Jullaion, an outgoing three-sport athlete who hopes someday to study architecture, he's made Desean's family's hall of fame. "I can't put my feelings about Jullaion into words," says Lisa Smith, Desean's mom. "He's a wonderful kid." Adds Desean, who now includes Jullaion in his nightly prayers: "I feel blessed that he saved me."

By **Anne Lang** and **Kristen Mascia**

"I thought I was going to die," says Jullaion of the Jan. 30 basketball game shooting. "But Desean was a kid and I needed to protect him."

3/9/09





MailBag

“As a working mother of two young daughters, I find Mrs. Obama to be an inspiring role model” **Emily Carpenter** Tega Cay, S.C.

We have seen enough cover pictures of the First Family. Mr. and Mrs. Obama are the President and First Lady, not celebrities. PEOPLE seems to be focusing on Washington instead of Hollywood.

Ronda Toole via e-mail

Please, no more stories on the Obamas! I'd rather know how the Bushes are settling into their new home in Dallas. I assure you, there are still millions of Americans who care about them.

Nicole Terrill via e-mail

I don't appreciate our First Lady's plan for "Obama china." What a waste when some Americans can't afford to put food on their table. She just lost my respect.

Susan K. Bond Sarasota, Fla.

Mrs. Obama should hire a wardrobe stylist. The lace dress she wore on your cover would be fine at a summer wedding but looks weird in winter.

July Trader Simi Valley, Calif.

THE OSCARS

As a longtime fan of PEOPLE, I must tell you that my all-time favorite picture is the large photo you ran of Kate Winslet with Meryl Streep. No airbrushing or camera tricks—just honest beauty.

Martha Ferguson via e-mail

Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale were by far the most glamorous couple at the Oscars—gorgeous inside and out!

Kathi Lambie Chatham, Ill.

With all those pages on the Oscars, couldn't you have found room for a picture of *Twilight's* Robert Pattinson? He has plenty of fans among your readers.

Kellie Smith via e-mail

BODY WATCH

It was infuriating to read "Too Fat to Model?" All of those women looked very attractive, even more so in the "now" than "before" pictures. By focusing on their shapes, you are promoting the terrible obsession our society has with weight. I believe articles like this contribute to the rise of eating disorders.

Madeleine Overturf Anchorage, Alaska

JULLAION JONES

I loved the story about the young man who saved a boy during a shooting at a basketball game. Jullaion Jones is truly a "Hero Among Us."

D. Massey Shawnee, Kans.

WRITE US

TO CONTACT EDITORIAL: Send a fax (212-522-0794), e-mail (editor@people.com) or mail (Letters to the Editor, PEOPLE, Time & Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020). Letters should include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number and may be edited for clarity and space.

3.30.09

MICHELLE OBAMA

Your timely interview with Mrs. Obama gave us valuable insight into a new kind of First Lady, one who is not very far removed from everyday life. She has visited neighbors in her new city, made sure her daughters continue to do chores and enjoyed a "girls' night in." I'm quite certain this is one woman who won't be trapped in a White House bubble.

Anne Mahoney Robbins Rockville, Md.

Michelle Obama is smart, successful and beautiful, but she has managed to remain down-to-earth. I am so proud to have such a woman as First Lady. She is a long-overdue breath of fresh air for the White House and our country.

Elaine Millar Mission Viejo, Calif.

MAKING HISTORY

Our recent story subject Ty'Sheoma Bethea—the 14-year-old eighth grader who wrote to lawmakers describing the deplorable conditions at her junior high school in Dillon, S.C., and attended President Obama's speech to Congress on Feb. 24—has found out she's once again going to be on display. The lavender dress she wore to Washington and a copy of her letter will be part of an upcoming exhibit at the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia. "Schoolchildren can see themselves reflected in her and be inspired," says Elaine Nichols, a museum curator. While honored, Ty'Sheoma was disappointed that her outfit was leaving her closet. So principal Amanda Burnette made a quick call to the dress manufacturer, who shipped another one, as well as a peach chiffon halter dress. "I'm part of history," says Ty'Sheoma. "I can't believe what's happening."

