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■ Washington

BY RYAN TICE

Even when he was in the NFL playing for the Minnesota Vikings, Pittsburgh Steelers, Jacksonville Jaguars and Kansas City Chiefs, former NC State star cornerback Dewayne Washington never strayed far from his North Carolina home for long.

The Durham native returned frequently to run youth clinics in the Triangle and serve the community he knew best through his foundation. It was clear although he wasn't physically in his home state, his heart was.

“I knew this was always going to be home for me, no matter where I was playing professional football,” he said. “That was a way for me to stay in touch from a grassroots perspective, even though I was playing somewhere else.

“I figured out a long time ago, when I was really young, that it was better to give than to receive. I saw that in my grandmother. I try to live my life that way. It all started with the foundation, but since then I've been afforded a lot of opportunities.”

After wrapping up his 12-year professional career in 2005, the former first-round draft pick returned to the area for good. He started his own construction and development company, D. Washington Group LLC, and did anything asked of him by his alma mater. The school wasn't bashful about requesting his service, and he was a proud member of the NC State Board of Visitors, NC State University Foundation Board, Alumni Association Board of Directors, Varsity Club and NC State Athletic Hall of Fame election committee.

He and his wife also established the Dewayne and Adama Washington Scholarship Endowment and the Washington's Multipurpose Room Fund. In July, Chancellor Randy Woodson asked him to join the NC State Board of Trustees, the university's governing body.

Dewayne Washington

Age: 43 on Dec. 27

Living: Wake Forest, N.C.

Occupation: Entrepreneur/head football coach at Heritage High School

Did you know? Was a three-year starter at NC State, leading the team in interceptions (four) his senior year ... The Wolfpack's annual defensive back of the year honor is called the Dewayne Washington Award.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

HOME SWEET HOME

Dewayne Washington's Heart Has Always Been In The Triangle

“Every time NC State calls, there is no way I can say no,” Washington explained. “When the Chancellor called and asked me if I wanted to join him on the Board of Trustees, I was thrown aback for a second. I knew for me, that was really the pinnacle. It doesn't really get any higher than that.

“That truly means a lot to me.”

His latest assignment was something he never could have dreamed of when growing up. He remembers when being sworn in looking around the room and thinking to himself, “How did I get here? I'm just a poor guy from Durham.”

Now that he has the Chancellor's ear, he has been able to make what may sound like a strange request at first. Harrelson Hall — the infamous circular building on the campus' Brickyard — is scheduled for demolition in the summer of 2016. It is where Washington first met his wife, so he is hoping the Chancellor will allow him to have a piece of the building after it is knocked down to give to her and remember a place most students would rather forget.

As much as he never could have guessed what was ahead when he left his hometown to come to Raleigh in 1990 and play for

Dick Sheridan, he never could have imagined the many positive changes Durham would undergo. Unsurprisingly, Washington has played a role in that too.

“When I came back, I got involved with Greenfire Development in Durham and was blessed to be a part of a lot of the revitalization that's going on here,” he said. “I pretty much lived all over Durham growing up and walked these same streets in downtown Durham.

“It was a very dark place during those times — in the late '80s — with tobacco leaving. But I always had fond memories of the place, even though it was pretty dilapidated downtown.

“When that opportunity presented itself, to be a part of making this place look a lot better than it looked, I wanted to be a part of that. It was a passion of mine to help the city that I love so much in any way I could.”

Washington noted that people were still hesitant to invest money in downtown Durham when he got involved — and that he and his partners were taking a “big risk” — but he can now walk around the city with a sense of pride about how well everything has turned out.

Washington has stayed involved with the local community, serving on NC State's Board of Trustees, participating in various real estate projects that have helped revitalize downtown Durham and becoming the head football coach at Heritage High School in Wake Forest.

PHOTO BY RYAN TICE