



NBA Star Russell Westbrook Joins Initiative to Promote Job Skills For At-Risk Young Adults

Partnering with the LA Conservation Corps and philanthropist Chad Brownstein, the NBA superstar launches the Westbrook/Brownstein Green Tech Program In L.A.

By Reagan Alexander, August 20, 2019

Chalk up yet another assist for Russell Westbrook.

The 2016-17 NBA MVP was on-hand in downtown L.A. on Aug. 19 for the launch of the Westbrook/Brownstein Green Tech Program, which is aimed at getting at-risk, inner city youth off the streets and into the classroom.

For Westbrook, whose Why Not? Foundation was created in 2012, coming home to lend a hand was a no-brainer.

"I feel like this particular program actually impacts the kids' futures, impacts their mind, the mentality of where they grew up, where they're from," Westbrook, 30, tells PEOPLE. "I definitely can relate to that because I feel like I was one of those kids growing up in the city of Los Angeles and finding my way, figuring out what was the best path for me."

While the Houston Rockets player found his own way, he saw few programs growing up that were aimed at sustained education or getting a foothold into the working world. That void fueled his desire to help.

"That was my motivation, honestly," he says. "I didn't look for anybody to help or hand out but I definitely thought it was important that people that had the 'power,' the ability to be able to help, did that. It was motivation for me to be able to get to a level, to a point, where I can give back to some of the same kids that are in the same situation that I was in."

Partnering with philanthropist Chad Brownstein and working with The LA Conservation Corps, an environmentally focused youth development organization, Westbrook says the Green Tech Program will train students in advanced careers as coding, computer literacy and computer engineering.

On Monday, the two men toured The Corps' John Van de Camp Center and watched the teens working and learning in the facility. The NBA star was also given some quick lessons in robotics, 3-D printing, and drone piloting.

"I grew up like the kids that I see here today," he says. "That is what resonates with me, these people that I can communicate with just because I know what it's like to grow up in the inner city without certain things, without the resources, without having books, without having the right things to be successful, without having the tools to be able to do that."

Now he's more than grateful to be able to give back. "I just want to be able to impact and inspire as many people as possible," Westbrook adds. "I can relate to them because I was one of them, and it's important that they know that and understand that I am here to help give them the resources for them to be able to be successful in this world."