

Ty Locklear

Home feels like being wrapped up in a warm blanket, watching Saturday morning cartoons. Home feels like your mom giving you a big hug, saying she is proud of you. Home feels like Thanksgiving leftovers. Home feels like nostalgia. Home feels like love. Home feels like comfort. Home feels like Oberlin.

I am a multi-generational resident of Oberlin. My dad moved here when I was little, and my mom's family has been here even longer—actually it feels like forever. Growing up with a lot of immediate and extended family in Oberlin, this town always felt like home. My nana's house is the epicenter of my family. She hosted family game nights on Friday, cookouts, holidays and birthday parties. Every major family event happens at my nana's house.

I also feel close to the community outside of my family. Oberlin is a diverse town filled with love, comradery, and creativity. I have played basketball since the fourth grade. Oberlin is a basketball community. I feel the support of alumni and the town every time I step onto the court. I have been blessed to be a varsity basketball player since ninth grade and am proud to be a part of such a rich tradition. I am also an artist, following in the footsteps of one of my older brothers. He painted a mural behind the library, and I had the opportunity to help reinvent the wall and paint a new mural over his work. I feel like my family is Oberlin and Oberlin is the Locklears. We are quilted throughout this town through art, athletics, and volunteering.

I also feel like Oberlin has shaped me into the young man I am today. I'm thankful for all the teachers I've been blessed to learn from over the years of going through the Oberlin City School system. Because of the teachers, tutors and guidance counselors, I've grown as a young man and have been a role model to a lot of younger students. I have worked for the City of Oberlin's Recreation Department for three years—and volunteered before I was even hired. I work with Playground and the After School Program. I serve as a mentor in these programs that work with kids aged 4-12 years. I make sure the kids are playing safely, eat healthy, and I am there to make sure they have fun. As a mentor, we plan games for them to participate in and we help them navigate interpersonal relationships—small kids are often fighting with one another, and it is up to us to keep the peace. I love working with little kids. When I was a part of these programs, I remember idolizing my mentors. Now I give back to the next generation and it feels good to mold the next generation of Oberlin.

I honestly don't know how my life would be without growing in Oberlin. Oberlin feels like family gatherings at my nana's house. Oberlin feels like the cheers every time I make a basket or the support when I make the news for painting a mural. Oberlin feels like my educators making sure I succeed. Oberlin feels like the happiness I get mentoring younger children. Oberlin feels like home.