

# SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS -- FROM PRISON TO STUDENT PRESIDENCY

By **Charlotte Observer**

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**S**HELBY, N.C. -- A high school student convicted of armed robbery will be allowed to serve as student body president next school year despite objections from parents.

The Shelby School Board decided this week to allow Curtis Preudhomme, 17, to serve as president for the 2002-03 school year.

The rising senior returned to Shelby High School in August after serving more than a year in prison for robbing a restaurant at gunpoint twice in 1999. He was tried and convicted as an adult.

"He has completely changed his life around," said David Grose, spokesman for the school district. "He has become very involved in his church. He's a B student. He's a hard-working young man."

But Larry Wilson, a Cleveland County judge who also has a child at Shelby High, said Preudhomme has had more than his share of second chances and doesn't deserve another. Wilson was one of two people who spoke out at the school board meeting Monday to urge board members to throw out Preudhomme's victory.

Preudhomme was convicted of the two armed robberies in 1999 when he was 13. He received a 13- to 16-month prison sentence. A judge suspended the sentence and placed Preudhomme on five years' of supervised probation so he could remain at home and go to school.

Preudhomme violated his probation by missing curfew, possessing marijuana and missing an appointment for treatment of substance abuse. His probation was revoked and he was sent to prison in 2000.

Wilson said the school board ignored its own rules about student elections by allowing Preudhomme to run for office. He said the rules prohibit students who have been convicted of felonies from serving.

School officials disagreed, saying there was nothing in their policy to keep Preudhomme from entering the race.

Still, the school board directed high school administrators to review their election policy and make changes to avoid another controversy.

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