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## Musician finds his rhythm: Drummer who lost dad to murder leading Head Start parade

By [Laura Crimaldi](#)  
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Charleston Sarjeant Jr., 20, comes from a family of percussionists, and this morning thousands of Head Start children will be dancing on the Common to the lilting beat of his steel drums.

"I'm going to look back at these kids and I'm going to be saying, 'One day they will be leading the parade,'" said Sarjeant, of Dorchester, who marched in the same Action for Boston Community Development Head Start parade as a 4-year-old.

A year later, when Sarjeant was just 5, his father, percussionist and Air Force veteran Charleston Sarjeant, 25, was killed by a gang of youths who stabbed and beat him to death without provocation in an Uphams Corner restaurant.

Sarjeant's Head Start classmates in Mattapan penned their condolences to the family in a booklet titled "It's OK To Cry," said his former teacher, Joyce Rene.

"I am so happy that he didn't fall into the violence and found some healing in the music," said Rene, director of Dorchester Head Start. "It fills my heart to see one of mine, one of ours, leading the parade as the music master."

Sarjeant, a 2005 graduate of the Boston Arts Academy, picked up percussion at age 7 from his mother, Debra, a native of Trinidad who met her late husband at rehearsals for a steel drum ensemble called Branches.

"At that time, my younger sister and I didn't know what 'to die' meant. We used to say, 'When is he coming back?'" said Sarjeant, who remembered blowing kisses to mourners at his father's 1992 funeral. "We had no idea what was going on."

Sarjeant, who goes by Charlie, performs regularly with the percussion ensemble Pan United and teaches music at Spontaneous Celebrations Community Center in Jamaica Plain, RAW Arts in Lynn and in Boston Public Schools. He is trying to save enough money to enroll at Berklee College of Music, where he's already been accepted.

Percussion is "a tradition from our culture and our family more so, and it's so unique," said Sarjeant, whose grandmother is also a drummer. "People expect 'The Little Mermaid.' A few years ago we played, 'Flight of the Bumblebee,' and we shocked people."

He said he has fond memories of marching around the Common in a costume as a Head Start toddler.

"It is so nice to know that he is leading," Rene said. "He once was led, and now he is leading."

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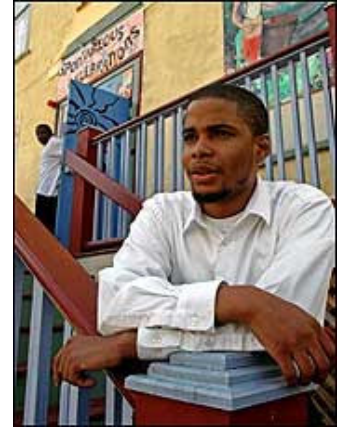
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Charleston Sarjeant in front of the Spontaneous Celebrations Community Center in Jamaica Plain. (Staff photo by John Wilcox)

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