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The Owen family is a young family with 'old school' values. They don't drink or smoke and they believe that in order to get respect, you have to give respect. Subsequently, not only do they say 'yes ma'am, yes, sir' to other adults and their elders, they also believe it's important to demonstrate respect, so they also say it to youth including their students and mentees. When given the news of their selection as 2010 Midwest Black Family of the Year they were elated! "Wow, this is such a great honor and we thank God for this encouraging yet humbling experience!" exclaimed Mrs. Owen in between tears of joy and shouts of excitement. For the Owens, 'family' is not a matter of words, but works, and experience.

Larry and Serena Owen, who were in recent years selected as WIZfm and MOJO Unsung Heroes, met at Northern Kentucky University where they both studied and graduated with a Master's Degree in Education. They have two children *who early theorist might suggest would also be viewed as 'only children' because of their age difference*, 16yr old Lloyd Memorial High School senior Jibril McCaster and 4yr. old daughter Destiny Owen. It's also important to add that the Owen family's 'old school' values take us back to the days when several generations lived under one roof, as they always take care to include Serena's mother Renee Wilson. Renee is a Missionary and former President of Central District Secretaries of Louis., KY who began her own mission on streets in what she uniquely calls her 'Bus Stop Ministry' where she helps those in need with cold bottled water in the hot summertime as well as warm hats and gloves in the winter. Since retiring she visits and helps out often and has always been a valued member of the Owen household and community as she always manages to give Bro. Avery of WCVG a 'shout out'!

The Owen family always demonstrates qualities of caring and putting others first. Nominees who nominated the Owen family share that, "For more than 15yrs, the Owen family has won grants and taken time to create and coordinate programs to help others. They volunteer in their church through youth ministry & Vacation Bible School, help at their children's schools, tutor, advocate for our youth, volunteer at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, and make donations to various organizations (even when they didn't have much themselves). They support neighborhood and community programs, as well as mentor and motivate students often times including them and their family as an extension of their own. Mr. Larry Owen, who is also a US Marine Veteran, has served in Covington Indp. Schools as a teacher, coach, and mentor since 1999. Mrs. Serena Owen served as an educator in Northern Kentucky schools and in NKU summer programs, created a mentoring program, presents at Diversity Conferences, served as an advisor for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and has written grants at no cost for various schools, churches, and organizations since 2000."

The Owen family also helps lead the Royal Ambassador Youth Ministry at their church (First Baptist Church of Elsmere where Rev. Norman Blankenship is Pastor) where their son Jibril also works faithfully in Video Ministry and helps with the Royal Ambassador Youth Ministry. Jibril is a 2007 Greater Cincinnati YMCA Youth Character Award recipient who helps out at home caring for his little sister who also has special needs. He's a 2010 January Fox19 & Penn Station Athlete of the Week and was recently named a 2010 Royal Ambassador Hero of the Year. He's also a Commonwealth Ambassador who encourages youth work to overcome obstacles, live beyond their disabilities, and continue to strive to reach their goals and dreams. Their lovely and energetic 4yr. old daughter doesn't let age keep her in the background as she helps at home, church, and is a CHAMPION volunteer for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

The Owen family recently completed their free 4th Annual Sportsmanship CHAMP Camp project that they began in 2007 for students who otherwise would not be able to afford camp. The long term effects of their project is that it fosters good attitudes, behaviors, and encourages students to display sportsmanship, good character, learn sport fundamentals, helps eliminate social barriers, and helps youth make responsible choices by saying 'no' to drugs and other things that may hinder their success.

Additionally, the Owen family takes time to acknowledge and show appreciation to others. Every year for over a decade they've used their time and financial resources to recognize more than 50 Tri-state businesses and organizations for providing outstanding service to customers and encourage over 50 individual excellent customer service providers to 'keep up the great work' through their impromptu award presentation that they use their own money to fund.

The Owen family positively represents the African American family and they look forward to representing as the 2010 Midwest Black Family of the Year as they continue to provide service and contribute to the advancement and development of our community!

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*(Left to right: Jibril-Iman McCaster (16), Renee Wilson (55), Destiny Owen (4), Serena Owen (37), and Larry Owen (40))*

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