



“Ginuwine” Elgin Lumpkin Gives Back

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By Shavaughn Byrd

The super-talented, multi-platinum R&B recording artist "Ginuwine" Elgin Lumpkin has another side that all his fans should know about. He and his wife Tonya "Sole" Lumpkin run a foundation called S.P.R.U.C.E. The group's mission is to help people that face mental and physical challenges, by helping them to cope with life's daily struggles so that they can lead normal lives. A few years ago, Ginuwine himself faced tremendous challenges, including attempted suicide and drug addiction, when his father committed suicide in 1999 and his mother succumbed to cancer the following year.

*Ginuwine was in New York City this week to promote the work of S.P.R.U.C.E and to speak with a group of participants in **Community Access' Harlem-based Howie the Harp Peer Advocacy and Training Center**, a job training program that helps people with psychiatric disabilities overcome stigmas in order to reach their potentials.*



I caught up with the artist, first on July 20th, and then on July 21^s, when he made his Harlem appearance:

SB: How did you deal with the tragedy of your parents, you sank very low how did climb back to the top?

G: In the beginning it was very difficult—as for anyone who has lost their parents it was a very hard time for me. And it did take me a little while to get back, in the process I found myself doing some things that I am not too proud of but I was able to pull through it. On my third CD I was able to do a song called "Two Reasons I Cry." (He says writing the song helped him a lot; he tells me that he was able to open up and get

a lot of things out through the song.) It was a difficult situation but all in all I had my family and prayer and friends that actually helped me to get through the situation."

SB: Can you talk a little bit about the organization and how it was started?

B: This was started for the better living of adults with special needs...What S.P.R.U.C.E stands for is Special People Requiring Unique Care Equally. My wife and I have always had a heart to give. I have always felt like while I'm here if I'm going to help somebody, I wanted to help people help themselves. (His wife is really good friends with their co-founder of the Foundation, Terry Mason, who was already involved with the helping of children). We sat down and spoke with her and let her know that we wanted

to put our money into something that was going to actually benefit others, to the point where we can actually see where our hard work and money was going. She introduced us to that area and as a couple we felt like this was something that we wanted to get into and that's pretty much how it came about.



Once we learned more about it and learned that people who have disabled adults living in their homes have to kick them out at age 18 because they only receive a check to that age and that is very sad. This is why we have a lot of crime and don't have many people who actually want to help them. I have always felt that if I'm giving a lot, much is required. I have had my ups and downs in life but all in all I have still been blessed so I felt like it's still my duty to give back. So this is what we wanted to do and once we looked into it and saw how bad a lot of them have it, we just wanted to do our part and help.

SB: How long has the organization been up and running?

G: It has been up and running for about two-and-a-half years so it's pretty fresh and it came about during a time when things weren't going good for myself. I went through some financial difficulties with business management but it really didn't stop me. It just made me more aggressive towards the situation, so that I can help because this is what I am supposed to be doing and regardless, I will be taken care of. So it's still a good situation and we are still doing good just building as the days go on. And we plan to get bigger and better and hopefully move around across the country and help as many people as we can.

SB: Can you talk a little about the event and what you will be doing tomorrow at Community Access?

G: The event tomorrow, I will talk about S.P.R.U.C.E. I'm not too much of a speaker but my wife and our partner will be doing most of the speaking. But I will be telling them what my inspiration for it was and what my duty as an artist is now and just to keep helping them and giving them motivation with whatever situation that they are going through just for them to stick it out, keep fighting through it.

SB: Do you have any other artist or producers who would like to jump on the band wagon to help grow the organization?

G: Well right now it's just my wife and me. But we are going to have a lot of fundraisers and things like that, where a lot of my friends will probably come out to help. So during that time we will ask, because a lot of times people don't really believe until they see it, or they pretty much think people do it for money. But they know me and they know my heart. So I'd rather let them see the progress that I'm making and what I'm doing before I ask, because seeing is believing and that's the most important part for the people that will give money.

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