

## Next Generation Leadership

- Max DelSignore: Hi folks and welcome to this edition of the Northern New York Community Podcast. I'm your host, Max DelSignore. We have an exciting and insightful discussion to share with you. We have five impressive leaders setting a meaningful standard for the next generation in the North Country.
- Max DelSignore: We will visit with three young professionals serving on the Northern New York Community Foundation Lead Counsel, Robert Sligar, who's the assistant vice president of Carthage Savings and Loan Association, Erin [Simser 00:00:24] graphic designer and marketing specialist for [WINNCompanies 00:00:27] and Joanna Loomis, Director of Provider Strategy for the North Country Initiative.
- Max DelSignore: We also have two high school seniors with us who help lead the Youth Philanthropy Council program at the Community Foundation. Lauryn Quinn who is a senior at Immaculate Heart Central School and in Grayden [Burnett 00:00:43], also a senior at Sackets Harbor Central School.
- Max DelSignore: Together we will talk about motivations for giving back, identifying characteristics of true leaders and where young leaders can make a difference in the North Country today.
- Max DelSignore: Before we kick off the conversation, let's take a moment to thank our supporters WPBS and the Northern New York Community Foundation. They are responsible for producing these important stories from the heart of our community. Please go to [wpbstv.org](http://wpbstv.org) to see the latest from WPBS and [nnycf.org](http://nnycf.org) for more on the Foundation's meaningful work.
- Max DelSignore: Now the introductions are complete. Let's have some dialogue. It's great to have all of you here.
- All: Thank you.
- Max DelSignore: Now. I just wanted to open with a general question and anybody can start with this, but given your age and where you are in the community right now, I just think it would be appropriate to start with what your motivations are to give back to the community the way that you do.
- Max DelSignore: Joanna, you want to start?
- Joanna: Sure. I think what really motivates me is the fact that this community has given so much to me, growing up in Rodman, New York, nearby. In less than economically favorable circumstances. I had some barriers that I had to overcome, but luckily I had a community around me that was able to support

me and lift me up and encourage me to take risks that I otherwise probably would not have, including applying to private universities.

Joanna: That was something that I just felt was unattainable, but because they urged me on, I was able to do that. I went to St. Lawrence University and it was a fabulous experience. Got to study abroad, got to really see a lot of the world. I owe that a lot to the community. So in turn, being back here as a resident and making this my really permanent home, it's important to give back to the community that's given so much to me.

Robert: In regards to me, a lot of my giving back was instilled in me at a young age. I grew up in a household where my parents were pretty involved in the community and they didn't just leave us home. They took us to those events. So when we were young, we were volunteering just the same as our parents. We were obviously not in the same capacity, but we were there. We were seeing it. We got to see the impact that it made.

Robert: I also grew up in a Catholic school, which didn't have funding. So the only way the school were to get funding was through our fundraisers or through volunteer support. So growing up that way, kindergarten through eighth grade, you learned that the more successful you are with your fundraising, you might get a better uniform or are you have better school supplies.

Robert: On top of all of that, you saw the parents that were willing to volunteer their time so that we could have a better educational experience. They didn't have to do that, but because they would give those hours, it was less resources that had to be paid for other people. So that kept the school afloat, and that school is still surviving because of volunteer efforts.

Robert: I have children, I have a daughter, so I want her to grow up with that similar experience. So my getting involved, I want to instill those values that my parents are instilled into me into to her as well as give back to the community that, as Joanna said, gave back to us.

Lauryn: As for me, as a senior I ... ever since seventh grade I was involved in community service at my school because I really wanted to give back what I used previously in my life. And once the Council was open to me I had to jump on the opportunity to join and help other non-profits around me.

Erin: My experience is a lot like Rob's. Growing up with a father and grandmother who were very active in the community, and seeing all the work that they were doing really laid the groundwork and the foundation for what I have felt I needed to do, coming back after college and raising my family here. I wanted to continue that legacy and continue to give back and do good things, for my family, for my friends.

- Erin: But really to show my children all the things that they can do when they set their mind to it. And also so ... it's a place that they're proud to be from and that there's opportunities for them and hopefully some place they remember and come back to with fond memories.
- Grayden: For me growing up I wasn't involved in my community very much and I still felt very passionate about my community and I love my community and any little negative thing that someone would say about the community that we all live in would really impact me in a way. So I felt passionate to join YPC so I could change some things.
- Max DelSignore: One of the things we talked about before this conversation was trying to pick leaders, either that you want to emulate, that you admire, and everybody here said it's hard to pick one because you have so many and they might be at a local level, national, global.
- Max DelSignore: To kind of narrow the focus of the question, what are some of the characteristics of a leader that you pick out that you feel are most important, and that maybe you try to emulate, whether that's in your job in your community?
- Lauryn: I think the biggest characteristic you can have as a leader is to hold responsibility for your actions and decisions. Excuse me. Because if you're not accountable then you have nothing to trace it back to and you have no self-acceptance
- Lauryn: And I think it's great to have your decisions on your mind at all times, no matter if you make the right decision or the wrong decision. To help you learn from that and to keep growing.
- Robert: I think a good leader is open minded, able to listen and I know it was spoken earlier but very humble. When you get put in situations where you're leading, you want to make sure that's not an agenda driven issue. It should be driven by the mission of the organization of which you're being a part of. I think that's very important. Now missions do change but they should change as a collaboration of what the work is being done, not because of something that something physically or specifically wants to do.
- Robert: I think if you run your mission to its course and it continues to grow, you build off that and you'll continue to do good work. And if you're willing to listen the people in which you're helping or even the people that you're working with, that will allow it to grow without having to put different aspects into your mission.
- Grayden: So I think a leader absolutely needs to be humble especially to those around him because you're not going to be a good leader if you let it go to your head and

you don't listen to those around you. And you have to be respectful to everyone around you because being a good leader starts with the people around you.

Joanna: For me, I'd say vision is a huge characteristic of leaders. I really admire leaders how have clarity of vision. Being able to sort through all of the minutia of everything that's going on and really having a very clear vision and decision-making processes to kind of use in moving forward. I admire that and try in my own ways to emulate that.

Erin: For me I would have to say inspiration. So I always find myself gravitating towards leaders who effortlessly inspire others with their words, with their actions. Really driving people to figure out what motivates them and continue to push them in that direction, and sharing stories and examples about good leaders and why they lead. I always find that very inspiring, for lack of a better word, and I hope that when I'm out and able to be put in a situation where I'm able to lead, that others can gain some kind of inspiration from that.

Max DelSignore: The five of you are in a position now where you have an understanding of how important it is to build your contacts or your network, either to maximize your leadership opportunities or seek them out. For Grayden and Lauryn, you guys, I think have a pretty good grasp of why that's key, as you go off to college or think about your first job. Can you share a little bit just for those that may listen to this how important it is to build connections, build your personal network, so that you can really and truly maximize your leadership opportunities?

Lauryn: As I learn to meet people and learn to communicate with others around the community, I realize that I have to build my relationships with people that have the same visions as me, the same mission as me because they're going to help me get to where I want to be.

Lauryn: The biggest part of building my network is definitely just having support around me to get to where I want to be and to help out around my community just to be able to end up at my end goal.

Robert: I guess the big way to look at it is you don't know what you don't know. So by being involved with more groups, it helps you build a vision of your area a little bit more than through a small lens. A lot of people out there are trying to do good things, and a lot of them are trying to do the same good things. And sometimes if they're not working together they could be competing against each other not because they're trying to compete against each other just because there is limited resources out there in regards to funding.

Robert: Where a lot of times, if they understand each other's missions, and you work together well with them you could either collaborate together to build more resources or reduce a lot of the costs that might come into play when you're trying to do things in a similar manner.

- Robert: So the more people you know, the more people that you know and you understand them and once you understand them and understand their mission, you'll realize that a lot of things you do will fit. Especially in a small area, and if you start working together on the things that fit, I think everyone will be more successful.
- Joanna: I completely echo that yeah, I think sometimes ... especially in America we kind of fall prey to this Lone Ranger syndrome that you think you've got to go out and be the only one doing sometimes and there's a whole context that you're walking into that you need to understand and you're only going to do that by forming real human connections with others in the community, who can give different perspectives on the very cause that is ... that you're passionate about. So I don't think we can effectively lead alone. We have to effectively lead with a whole teamwork of a whole group of people in the community.
- Grayden: I feel you can be the most avid community member, community leader, but to certain extent you still don't recognize and realize different organizations and what different people are doing in your community. So I feel like even if you are that one person who is super involved with your community you can always do more and you will continuously learn more about your community all throughout the process.
- Erin: I think that's one of the great things about the Community Foundation and being a part of LEAD is meeting all the different kinds of people and the businesses that they're in, and organizations that they're tied to. We've all had an opportunity to work together and talk about our experiences and build partnerships and collaborations that I think have really helped benefit this community. And being that it's a small community I feel like we do an exceptional job bringing the leaders together, working together, to really make this a much better place to live and work.
- Robert: And just to touch on that again, if you're going after a very important mission and you're reaching out for that support, coming from you to certain businesses might not make an impact as maybe someone in that business that also agrees with your mission. So by making connections with your local businesses, your local non-profits or just local people that care about your community when they go in to present it, it might mean more than coming from you.
- Robert: So I think it's very important that you build networks because if they believe in your mission they're going to be an advocate for your mission without you having to be that one person always going out there.
- Max DelSignore: That's a great point. One of the things, Erin, you touched on, and I think it's a nice segue, or a good point in the conversation is about our lead council group at the Foundation. So it's essentially it's a cohort of young professionals from the Tri-County region. I think there's more than 20 than are on the Counsel

currently that are charged with being a strategic grant-making arm of the Northern New York Community Foundation. What's unique about Rob, Erin, Joanna do is identifying the need, doing the research to really hone in on that need and thoughtfully approach how you can take charitable resources and dollars to address it.

Max DelSignore: And to the three of you, you and your peers to a really nice job thinking through the process. It probably could be agonizing at times, because you're trying to figure out what's the end-game here, but to your credit I think LEAD does a really outstanding job picking out the needs that matter most to you as a group and then trying to deploy the resources that are going to matter and make a difference.

Max DelSignore: To some more directed questions, and Joanna I want to start with you on this first. Your focus is on health care with the North country Initiative. You see an array of community needs through that lens. Where can young leaders really create change in this community, and maybe not necessarily just in health care, but as you look at the community as a whole, where can young leaders start and help right now?

Joanna: Like we talked about earlier in the day, I think, at the risk of sounding generic, I don't think there's an area in our community that doesn't require young leaders' attention or any leaders' attention. So I think what's important with this is that leaders are in tune with what kind of stimulates them and what they're passionate about and that's where you need to start.

Joanna: And really to Rob's points earlier again, form that network so that you're meeting with and talking with people of different perspectives and in different sectors of your community that are also passionate about that need. What do they know about the need? What's their take on it? And I think it's important too, to really, whatever you do, be able to separate out the symptoms of the need versus the causes of the need.

Joanna: Sometimes very well-meaning people or organizations focus on the symptoms of a need but they're not adequately addressing the causes of the need. I think you really need to do both. It shouldn't be one or the other. So, an example of that could be a food pantry and as someone who used to work in the home services world, and that was a program that we ran, food pantries are wonderful and much needed. But at the end of the day they're kind of just treating the symptom, right?

Joanna: So how can you bolster that and do things that approach the actual cause. So that could be things like spurring community gardens, teaching people how to cook with healthy foods, doing other things in the world of economic empowerment so that people don't ever have to be in the position to utilize a food pantry. So that's one small sliver, but the moral of the story for me, I guess,

is find what you're passionate about and then go find out as much as you can about that in the context of your community and that will guide your work moving forward.

Max DelSignore: Erin is unique in your scenario., you have two sons. Ryder's a high school senior, so thinking about college, already has his institution picked out. He's going to Le Moyne. But you also have Max, who's in elementary school.

Erin: Right.

Max DelSignore: Tell us a little bit about those principles, values of giving back, that you share with your two boys.

Erin: Sure.

Erin: So much like my upbringing, I felt it was very important to teach them at a very early age about the importance of giving back, volunteering, setting that example. So it wasn't just about talking to them, which we did do that at great length, but it was also about showing them and bringing them along to things that my husband and I are actively involved in. And letting them see the good that it's doing. And the things that we were passionate about, and a lot of our conversations would lead up to, okay, well, what kind of things are you interested in? What kind of things do you feel passionate about? Really finding ...

Erin: And a lot of it has changed significantly from the early ages to now. A lot of it is very sports driven because they're sports fanatics, whether it's the booster club or my little guy just did a jump rope-athon where he raised a bunch of money for the American Heart Association. At the end of the day he said, mom, I just got to raise a bunch of money for kids how have bad hearts.

Erin: So it's those little things and he got very excited about it, and that made me excited because I am hoping that these kind of personal achievements, goal setting that's also happening at the same time, will be something that they'll continue to use throughout their lives in hopes that they continue to find what they're passionate about. And do good in their community wherever they end up.

Max DelSignore: How much did Max raise?

Erin: It ended up being 1,350.

Max DelSignore: In how many days?

Erin: It was two weeks.

- Max DelSignore: I mean, that's pretty remarkable to do that in two weeks' time.
- Erin: Yeah.
- Erin: I mean, he's cute so he won the cute vote. I think. We had very generous friends and family but he was out there he was like, I've got to send another message, Mom. I've got to send another message. So he was out talking and schmoozing and raising a lot of money and it was a super-proud mom moment.
- Max DelSignore: Well that's a great example. Gives us hope, certainly.
- Erin: Yeah.
- Joanna: And I think that's cool that it's telling him that you don't have to change the world in one big fell swoop. You ... There are so many different ways to give back and each one is unique and meaningful in its own way and I think that's been another message of probably YPC and LEAD that sometimes I think, we think we've got to change the whole world and that starts by doing one thing. So you kind of have to start somewhere and you can make change in any number of ways as that's really cool, that-
- Erin: Well, and I think the biggest thing for that, too, was the whole goal setting process. Originally his first goal was \$250 he said, I think I can do that. And we broke it out, he had two weeks. We figured out how much money every day, and he ended up reaching the 250 in less than 24 hours, and he looked at me, and he said, that happened really fast. And you know, so that kind of sparked more conversation about setting goals and doing the right thing and why we're doing it. It gave us a lot of opportunity to talk about the whys which I think are really important in where you choose to put your efforts because there are so many things that we all could be involved in, but unless you're truly passionate, you might not be able to give that 110%. There's only so much of our days that ... you know, between families and work and everything else that's going on that we can give, so really being passionate helps keep the train moving forward, I think.
- Max DelSignore: Rob, your story is a little different. Not necessarily unique but growing up, you're native here. From Carthage. You go away for work for a while. Lived in Boston for a few years, but you decided to come home. Can you walk us through just the though process to coming back and also why you got involved as quickly as you did into the level that you're participating now?
- Robert: So Boston wasn't necessarily, hey I want to go to Boston. It was a career that presented itself and when you're young you follow work. And I was very successful and I enjoyed Boston. I mean, if anyone's every been to Boston. Historical city. Lots to do. I mean, I was there for over three years and I probably didn't touch one eighth of what you could do out there. Not even close to that.



- Robert: But when I got through my third and into my fourth year of being out there, wasn't ... you can ... You're happy because you're successful but you can't really explain it until you actually feel it inside, but you're not happy, I guess is the best way to approach that. I got a phone call from Carthage Savings, asking me if ... there's a spot open, we would like to have someone local. Especially in the banking work, banking is big on relationships. People want to be comfortable when you're dealing with money and financing. So I took the opportunity. It gave me a chance to come home, see my family.
- Robert: Which I knew I wasn't happy so I was like, getting closer to family definitely made me happy. But I didn't really find my happiness until when I got home, Carthage Savings' philosophy is, hey, be out in the community. And I was ... my family is well known, so I owe a lot of it to my parents, but I was recruited to sit on some committees and some boards immediately.
- Robert: Once I started doing that you realize something. Because when you're in a city, and you want to get involved, and I tried to get involved out there, and you can go to the food shelter and feed people for a day, but like Joanna said, that's just helping with that current situation. It's not stopping the problem. And in cities they're jobs. People that are out there helping jobs it's their job, it's their life. So you don't just get in to something like that. You have to actually put a career into it. You can't ... you can volunteer but the volunteer level support in a city is pretty much just patching the problem, not actually making an impact on it.
- Robert: And I'm sure there's people that can go into a city as a volunteer and make an impact, but it's just ... you're a little fish in a huge ocean, so it's a little bit different. You come home to a local area where you know people, you have connections, you see people you grew up that maybe are in a little bit of trouble. You can make decisions that can immediately impact their lives right away, and it's as easy as saying yes.
- Robert: So I said yes to a couple boards, some that I had no experience about, which in hindsight was very beneficial because I didn't have an agenda going onto these boards. I can get onto them, I can listen to their mission. I can hear what they're trying to say, and just kind of be there was a resource. And as more people ask me to help because I had the time to do so, I didn't have a family yet, I didn't have a child at that point in my life. I could keep saying yes and helping out.
- Robert: What I came to find out by doing that is that my biggest support could be collaborating with all the boards I was on as a whole. So I was finding out just in the small town of Carthage that there'd be so many organizations and they'd be running events on the same exact day. Well there's only so much money in one community and they can only be in one place at one time. So when you're running an event and another organization, they're not trying to compete against each other but they weren't on each other's boards to say, hey, we plan

this on this day, and once you plan it you market it and you resource it, you're not changing your day once you find out someone else is doing that.

Robert: So an immediate impact was, I'm sitting on a couple of boards planning things on the same day, and I said hey, wait a minute. This isn't a good idea. Let's spread this out, and immediately they started making more money on their fundraising events because they weren't taking advantage of a limited resourced because they're spreading it out and getting all the resources pulled into them for those specific days.

Robert: Once you start to experience that, and you can see that you're making an impact, that's when you found out, I personally found out what I was missing is that I could make an immediate impact on a smaller community that I wasn't able to do in a big city.

Robert: And on top of that, coming to a local town, cost of living isn't as demanding, so you actually can establish yourself up in the North Country by working hard, by building that network, finding your career that you're passionate about, still being able to make a good living, support a solid family, but truly give back to the people around you and when you can put a smile on someone's face because you're making their lives better, there's no better reward.

Max DelSignore: There's a sense of fulfillment there, maybe that was lacking in your time in Boston.

Max DelSignore: Lauryn and Grayden, you serve on Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council so this is probably a good place just to do a brief background on it. But it's also an advisory council of high school students affiliated with the Community Foundation. Representatives from three schools, Watertown High School, Immaculate Heart Central, and Sackets Harbor. And as a group, you're responsible for making some meaningful grants to support non-profit organizations in Jefferson-Lewis, St. Lawrence counties.

Max DelSignore: What I think is interesting is the councils have been in operation for eight years and in totality it's given out \$125,000, approximately, to support the non-profit sector which I think is terrific.

Max DelSignore: But the two of you, you've been a part of two years where you've given out close to \$40,000 of that \$125,000, which I think is really neat. To transition to that experience and ask two direct questions. You have to work together with other high school students to make these decisions and it's a difficult thing to do even for adults that serve on boards. It's hard to come to a consensus. Share a little bit about that process of coming to a decision that you know is ultimately going to make the community better.

- Lauryn: When I joined the Youth Philanthropy Council, it was group of ... all of kids my same age, as opposed to the year before when they had age ranges from ninth grade to twelfth grad or tenth grade through twelfth grade. I think what has made the biggest difference during my years on the council is having kids that are my same age growing together.
- Lauryn: It's been easier to discuss with everyone throughout the three years that I've bene on the council, and we've come to conclusions easier since we've known each other for so long. But it is still extremely difficult because we don't all have the same background, and we have different views and different missions ourselves, and we don't all mesh together. So I think that it's great that we have the different ideas. But it's hard to come together to make one decision.
- Grayden: Like Lauryn said, it is a very diverse group and I think that's great. And you want to be aware of other people's opinions. You can't let your own ideas stick in your head, and that's the only thing you're going to believe. But at the same time you don't want to lose your voice, because if you lose your voice you're just going to be the puppet that's saying the same thing as everyone else and that's also very damaging to the Council.
- Max DelSignore: What did you guys learn about yourselves going through this process. I mean you're going to be finishing up your third year, so you've matured a lot, you've grown a lot personally. As you reflect what do you take away about what you've learned about yourselves.
- Lauryn: I've learned that I'm not always right. It's hard to admit to myself, but having the different views on the Council they've shown me a different view, just to repeat myself. But it's been crazy to envision other areas of the community and to be able to realize something that I didn't understand properly and just have the support behind me to view something in a different way.
- Grayden: Not only have I learned so much about my community, but I've also learned a lot about myself. Before I joined the council, I lacked ambition to get involved in my community. This really turned my life around because now I'm involved in so many different organizations and committees and it's really opened my eyes to all the great good things that so many people work on tirelessly even in the small community of Watertown.
- Max DelSignore: Grayden, this is a question for everyone, but I want to start with you first. When you put yourself into a position of leadership, which I think for the Council you're all leaders, when you step into that role, what is the most important thing to remember as you begin to serve in that kind of capacity as a leader?
- Grayden: I think the biggest thing that you want to remember is that you're leading for a reason. You're leading for the people around you and it's not just your voice

that you have to lead for in your head, you have to be respectful and listen to everyone else's voice because that's the true reason why you're leading.

Max DelSignore: I mean for the three of you LEAD members, I mean you're on multiple committees, various boards. Have you either had to report to boards potentially if you're in the non-profit sector? In a position of leadership what are the things to be mindful of?

Robert: I think what our young students here, which I think that program is awesome, just said that the better you are at listening to the people around you, and understanding their point of view, I think it's easier to come to a consensus as a group. I feel like sometimes when an organization can be agenda driven, they might lose sight of their mission, and they might fill their board with that side of the agenda. Where in realistic, if you had a board that's ... understands their mission goes after their mission and then adapts their mission to the actual people that they're serving, you're going to go in a direction that's actually make you more successful.

Robert: Because people always want to see success, they want to see improvement. People are going to give to organizations that are showing growth in regards to the need that they're focusing on. Whether it's an organization that's helping individuals or just an organization as like a business. People want to see success. And us, the reason why we serve on these things is because we want to see success in our community getting better.

Robert: So if you're willing to listen to people that come from different perspectives, I think that's why our LEAD group does so well. None of us are in the same careers. None of us came from the same background but we came together and we always come to a similar need and we go after it. Because we can come to an agreement that this is definitely something that we need to work on and we feel that we can make a difference on it.

Robert: Now if someone really wanted to go after something and they weren't willing to listen to the other people, then we can never agree on anything because there's always be that consistent back and forth. So the willingness to understand, hey, maybe that isn't something that I thought was important but they're making good points. So let's see where this goes, and if it doesn't go in a direction we think, we will redirect it. But you've got to take the chance to go down the road to see if it's right. And if you're not willing to take those chances, then you're never going to accomplish anything.

Max DelSignore: You bring up a good point, Rob, because change is hard. Doesn't matter at what level it is in your community. How do you adapt to that can be different but good leaders find a way, or you know, call on certain skills or characteristics to help shift the leadership a little bit to accomplish that goal. Let's talk about that

a little bit. Adapting to change in a community. Why is it important as a leader to be open minded and adapt to the change around you?

- Joanna: I think it's because your work has to be subservient to the needs. It can't be the other way around. So sometimes again, it's human nature. You get kind of stuck on one thought or idea one view of things, and you want to change the world to meet your vision of it, in a sense when really it should be the other way around. If your study of the community and its needs is telling you to go in a certain direction, even if that direction isn't the direction you originally wanted to go in, or even worth thinking about, or that's not your passion, you have to ... be mindful of that and go after it. Otherwise, it's just foolish, essentially. So that would be my take on that.
- Robert: I think that's where being unbiased really comes into play. I think solid boards in our area are people that are very unbiased and they take the data as it's presented and make the decision based on that information.
- Grayden: I agree with what was said. I think it's very dangerous to develop tunnel vision and focus on that one certain aspect, that one goal, that you're really rooting for. Because in doing so you can often forget and oversee many other important aspects that aren't so prevalent to your beliefs. You have to take a step back, take off that filter and look at everything as it is to get a really good understanding. Your community and the needs in the community.
- Joanna: And I've got to give a plug to some of the resources that we have in our community to help focus that and so I'm missing a bunch I'm sure, but when I think about our community and what needs are in our community, I think about some of the efforts that some of our community partners and organization do to really study that in a very scientific way.
- Joanna: So I think of JCC's Center for Community Studies, how they do a survey every year, Fort John Regional Health Planning or which is a partner to where I work, North Country Initiative. They do community surveys and studies and community action planning council does community studies, so there really is a wealth of knowledge out there, for anyone, young leaders, leaders of any age, people who want to get involved, to take a look and kind of put their finger on the pulse of what's going on in our community from a hard data perspective.
- Joanna: I think being emotionally connected to a cause is always important, but it can't just be emotional. You have to back it up with actual data and really study it from a more critical standpoint. And so we have a lot of resources in our community to help us do just that.
- Max DelSignore: Where can we be better as young leaders? You know, the five of you are really demonstrating this in a very positive way now. Through your volunteer work, committees you serve on, in your school and in your community but there's

always room for improvement. So where can our young leaders, whether its ourselves or others, where and we be a little bit better?

Robert: I think the willingness just to say yes. A lot of the boards, like I said before, that I serve on I didn't have any experience with a board, I didn't really know what their mission was. I knew they needed help. I had help that I was willing to give. And then once I learned their mission, and I become passionate about it, I was a lot more engaged with it.

Robert: You also have to be willing, if you're in a situation where you do say yes, and you don't become passionate about it, you don't want just want to take up a spot, because that's not going to help the organization which you're serving on. So Erin said it before, you have to passionate about what you're doing.

Robert: But just because you don't know about the organization, you know they do good things, you do have some time. Be willing to say yes, especially at a young age, because it's going to open you up to networking. People in your life that can make a difference down the road, but it's going to allow you to see that yes, you as a young person or a young adult or even an older adult, you can make a difference with one hour of service.

Robert: And then once you do that one hour of service, if you're like, wow. I made a difference. I really like this. Give them another hour and then maybe serve. But don't just not say yes to something because in the back of your head you're thinking, man, I don't know a thing about that group. I don't want to mess up. Things like that. Because at the end of the day, you're not going to mess up if you're volunteering, you're going to be helping.

Erin: I think more opportunities for young leaders to bring in students into situations where they can learn about the process. So, to sit in on a board meeting and experience what it's like, to go to a volunteer opportunity and be hands on and see what good it's doing. I think the more we can do that and really get the youth of our community involved ... I think it will be beneficial because I think they'll see what it's ultimately doing. And also make you less scared when somebody does approach to say hey, you want to come sit on a board? Or you want to come sit on a committee? You know, you've already been introduced to that, so hopefully it'll seem less scary. I know when I sat in on my first I was, like, I don't know what to do. So just watched. I literally said nothing, because I hadn't really been introduced. I wasn't able to dip my toe in. I just kind of got shoved in full force.

Erin: So I think if we can allow these experiences to be good first experiences, where it's not intimidating, nobody is going to think badly if you have an opinion, you know, put you in situations where people are truly respectful of you, the time that you're giving, your opinion that you're giving. The more opportunities we can look for as young professionals, and even people who have been super

active in the communities since way back in the day who are still very active today, encouraging their kids, their grandkids, really pushing that generationally, I think is also going to be helpful.

Grayden: I think many people, especially today's youth, often forget that everyone is a leader. You don't have to hold a fancy title, or an important position to be a leader. In your daily life, someone's always listening. You're always influencing someone even though it may be unconscious it's there, you're always influencing someone. So if you use your words as a tool rather than weapons all the time, you're going to ... experience changes in your life.

Robert: Well said.

Max DelSignore: To wrap up this is not something ... I think it's appropriate for the group, but it's something to think about, when we hear the word legacy, I think we feel like we're at a certain age in our lives, and the back nine, I guess you could say, is one way of looking at using the sports analogy but ... I really think it's important, the Community Foundation we try to do a good job of this, where legacy really is meant for anybody regardless of what your age is in life.

Max DelSignore: Think about what you're going to do for your community, what do you want that to be. And I think it's an important question to ask for the five of you here. When you think about where you are in your life right now and how you've committed yourself to your communities, what do you think you want your legacy to be?

Robert: I'm going to be a little selfish with this one. I'm going to take it towards my family. If my daughter will grow up and give back that'll be my legacy. I don't care if my name's on a wall, or things like that. But if she'll grow up and she will say, you know what, I'm going to say yes like my dad did, and she gets reward out of it, she's not the person that will go get her job, have her life, and not want to give back. But if she'll be the person that grows up and says, my dad was willing to say yes. He helped people. I can do the same thing. If she's willing to do that, then that will be my legacy will through her.

Robert: And I think that's extremely important because the more people growing up that are willing to say yes, you hope that her friends will follow in her direction or maybe her kids will follow in her direction after that. But she can make a difference. You know what I mean?

Robert: I'm hoping that I'm making a difference. I can't tell you that I am. I'm serving. I'm doing things. I feel like that they're important. You don't really know who you're impacting every day, you don't know who goes home and says, man, this really helped today. But I could see it, when I'm an older man, and I've seen my daughter maybe going out there and helping, I will know that I made a difference at least through her.

- Joanna: I think for me and I've never really thought about that before, but about a legacy, but I guess if my legacy could be, in a sense, a big mosaic that I'm part of a much bigger mosaic of legacy for a whole community, if that makes any sense at all. So if I can through my actions and work, really synergize with the actions and the work of other leaders in the community to make changes both big and small, I think that would be amazing and some of those changes might be loud and some might be really quiet. And only be felt privately by individuals in the community or you know, some could be very small and some could be big. So I guess when I think about that, that's what comes to mind.
- Erin: I think a lot what Rob had said, growing up in this community and having a grandmother and a father who were pretty active in the community, I would get people who would come up to me and say gosh, I remember when your grandmother did this, and I remember when she was so influential in that. And I guess thinking about it, my hope would be some day my grandkids are walking around the community, and someone says, hey, your grandma was awesome. She did this and this and this and it's somebody that my family can be proud to say that they were part of the family and here's what she ... here's everything that she instilled in me and so just really passing that down generation to generation. I think having come from that, and seeing first-hand how great it is, how wonderful it is to be a part of that, and know she was my grandma, she was awesome. And so many people loved her and adored her for so many different reasons. So I think that that's something I hope to achieve. Someday.
- Lauryn: I hope my legacy just inspires others. I don't have a plan for myself quite yet, but as long as I can inspire others to get involved in the community I know that I've done my job. Whether it's my family or just people around me, that's what I hope to do.
- Grayden: Like Lauryn said I want to influence as many people as possible because like I already said, before I was engaged in YPC and other organizations I was completely oblivious to all the good that was going on in our community and now that I'm involved and I took that risk, and I told myself, you know what, we're going to do this. And I become involved in YPC, I'm aware of so many things that are going on and just how great our little community is.
- Max DelSignore: I just have to say thank you to the five of you for serving the way that you do. For being a part of the Community Foundation's mission and work the way that you are. And for continuing to inspire others the way that you do. I think it's really great. You should be certainly proud of all that you've done so far. It's really exciting to watch what you're going to be doing next as you go along. And it's really an honor to work alongside you and making the community better so thank you.
- Joanna: Likewise.





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Grayden: Thank you.

Robert: Thank you, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Lauryn: Thank you.

Max DelSignore: That concludes another edition of the Northern New York Community Podcast. It is easy to find and listen to all episodes of the Northern New York Community Podcast. Just search for the podcast on Apple iTunes, Spotify, Google Play, Stitcher, or other podcast platforms. You can also listen to interviews and see other content such as interview transcripts, photo galleries, all on our podcast website. Just go to [nncypodcast.com](http://nncypodcast.com) to see more.

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