

Max DelSignore: Welcome into another episode of the Northern New York Community Podcast. I'm your host Max DelSignore. With growing concern about the lack of young leaders in the North Country in the next generation, taking their talents and budding skills elsewhere, the Northern New York Community Foundation decided to take on the responsibility of nurturing and empowering youth in community philanthropy.

Max DelSignore: The creation of the Youth Philanthropy Council 10 years ago was designed to give high school students a glimpse into the world of the nonprofit sector, but also the opportunity to help those agencies by awarding grants to enhance their mission and work. Since the program began, close to 150 high school students from five different schools have participated in the Youth Philanthropy Council program. More than 80 grants to nonprofits in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties have been awarded, totaling over \$125,000. The tangible outcomes from the grants are noteworthy and meaningful, but the real progress is being made within the council itself.

Max DelSignore: High school students learned to lead, collaborate, respectfully deliberate and make a true difference in their community. A spirit of philanthropy builds inside each student. It's amazing what real success, trust and encouraging can do to inspire our youth. On this podcast, we bring in four former Youth Philanthropy Council members and they share their reflections from their time on the council, but also dive into what they learned as they embark on the opening chapter of their professional careers and also how they plan to give back in the future. We're excited to bring you four individual conversations in this episode. We hope that you enjoy them.

Max DelSignore: I'm happy to be joined now by Marcus Lavarney, a recent graduate from Clarkson University. Marcus served on YPC for three years as a Watertown High School student. He's headed to Amsterdam or Saratoga in a couple of months to begin his career in supply chain management as an operations manager for Target. Before he heads to the capitol region, we're lucky to get Marcus here on the podcast. Thanks for coming through.

Marcus L.: Thanks for having me.

Max DelSignore: First, for the audience, just explain what supply chain management is. What's the career and what will your responsibilities be when you're at Target?

Marcus L.: Supply chain management is essentially how we get goods to and from our start point to our end consumer. For my personal experience, I'm going to be working as an operations manager in Target's northeast distribution center. What that means is that I'm going to be running a team of around 50 employees in a 2.2 million square foot warehouse. I'm working in the warehousing department.

What that does is again it controls the ins and outs of the goods in the warehouse. My building services 97 Target stores in the Northeast including Watertown's Target. We just kind of monitor and procure the needs for each store.

Max DelSignore: As a Watertown High School student, did you ever think supply chain management was going to be your career choice?

Marcus L.: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. It kind of came on once I got to Clarkson. First year business students all kind of take the same gen ed courses, and then from there you can step into whatever field or profession you kind of see yourself going into. I thought that supply chain management would be good for me. There's a lot of doors that it can open. I'm happy to say that I've signed on with Target.

Max DelSignore: Not many students get a chance to serve three years on the Youth Philanthropy Council. It's quite a stretch. What was that experience, as you reflect back, what was that experience like for you?

Marcus L.: Starting off as a tenth grader, you think of a tenth grader today, they're not heavily invested into their communities. To my own extent, neither was I. It wasn't until I really got onto Youth Philanthropy Council that I saw what the community is at a whole and what the needs are. It really kind of opened my eyes to the community not only in Jefferson County and Watertown, but to Lewis County and St. Lawrence County and how our community really interacts with one another and that there's more needs than what we see as youth.

Max DelSignore: Was there a particular grant or nonprofit presentation or just an organization in general that you remember or recall fondly through that experience?

Marcus L.: Yeah. I mean we... Like you said, over three years I saw a lot of grants and it was a great experience. With unlimited need and limited resources, it was tough to kind of learn how to say no to great causes. One of the things that I've kind of stayed up with and actually utilize their resources is the Clayton Opera House. I remember I think it was my junior year they came in and presented a grant to us. I've went to I think at least two or three shows after that. To see their revitalization of the opera house was great.

Max DelSignore: Kind of gives you some access to the arts a little bit of what's out here in the North Country in terms of arts. That's really great. How did YPC shape you as a person individually?

Marcus L.: I think not only did it change my outlook on my community and philanthropy as a whole and what it means, but it also taught me leadership. I think that kind of taking the helm at meetings and being able to steer our group into a direction that's more meaningful and like I said, learning how to say no to great

opportunities and charities when we only have an allocated fund. I think it taught me really great life skills, and I think moving forward, the lessons that I've learned via philanthropy will be with me for a long time to come.

Max DelSignore: Outside of your parents or let's say family members, is there one individual or persons that you admire in the way that they give to their community?

Marcus L.: One person I definitely think is Mark Taylor. Mark Taylor is the principal over at Starbuck Elementary. He was the varsity soccer coach at Watertown High for many years. He was a gym teacher and decided to pursue becoming a Starbuck Elementary principal. What he does I think is just amazing for our community. He serves on so many boards. He's very, very active in our community. Not only in Watertown, but in his hometown of Clayton. He referees volleyball games. He coaches youth. He keeps stats at local lacrosse games. I think he's just all over the place and he just devotes so much of his time.

Marcus L.: I know that at Starbuck Elementary he's created an environment for his students and for his faculty to become a family and really offer mentorship and promote moving forward in your community and giving back to your community. I think he's done a great job. He's somebody that I definitely look up to.

Max DelSignore: Is there a particular skill or talent of Mr. Taylor's that you look at and you say, "He's doing that really well. Let me try to do that in some of the ways that I want to give back."

Marcus L.: Yeah. I think he deploys empathy. I think he really understands his students. He understand the parents. I think that being able to understand where other people are coming from and their point of view and being able to shift your point of view to match theirs, I think that just leads to a better world. If we all deployed more empathy like Mr. Taylor, I think the world will be a better place.

Max DelSignore: You had an advantage of going to a university or college. After four years at Clarkson and spending your childhood in Watertown, what community needs did you notice that were different or perhaps similar?

Marcus L.: One thing that I saw that was similar between Jefferson and St. Lawrence County was that there's a lack of youth coming back to the area after higher education. For example, I know that a lot of my hometown friends that had graduated from Watertown High aren't necessarily coming back to the area for jobs. I met a lot of good people at Clarkson that were from the Potsdam/Canton area and they're not returning back after.

Max DelSignore: What do you think it's going to take? Because you're in the position right now. What would it take for you to eventually come back to this area, have a family, raise children?

Marcus L.: That's kind of one of the things that I've really thought about throughout my life. I think it's kind of a lack of industry at this moment. Like I said at the start of the podcast, I'm in supply chain management, so there isn't a whole lot up in Watertown or in St. Lawrence that kind of tailors to my needs. I know that there a couple Clarkson alums that are from the area are returning kind of construction management or architecture firms, but I think the lack of industry is one of the things that's kind of deterring myself as well as my classmates away.

Max DelSignore: I've got a scenario for you.

Marcus L.: Okay.

Max DelSignore: You're allowed to volunteer at any organization that means a great deal to you, but it has to be separate from sports. I know you're a big lacrosse guy and I know you've done coaching, but excluding volunteering in sports in some capacity, where would you see yourself helping out?

Marcus L.: That's a good question. I think I would volunteer my time at the American Red Cross at a blood drive.

Max DelSignore: Why is that?

Marcus L.: A couple years ago my freshman year, my mom was diagnosed with leukemia. She found out she had leukemia by going to a blood drive giving to others. There's always, always a need for blood. There's also a need at blood drives. I think volunteering and giving back in that way would mean a lot to me and would mean a lot to my family because I know how much that has done for my family.

Max DelSignore: Do you believe you are a philanthropist?

Marcus L.: I do. I think that although I haven't been able to give financially at this point yet just getting out of college, I think that giving back through service and my time to my community wherever I'll be, I think that those values that YPC, my community and my family have instilled in me will carry on. I plan on being a philanthropist throughout my life.

Max DelSignore: While you're leaving the area to start your career, I hope we can continue to keep you connected to the North Country as much as we can. It feels as though you have a deep appreciation for the area and where you grew up. We really appreciate your insight and thoughts on the podcast, Marcus. Best of luck down the road.

Marcus L.: Thanks for having me.

Max DelSignore: The craft to providing health and wellness care is nothing new to Sarah Van Eenenaam. The family lineage has been connected to the profession for three generations and Sarah's next up to continue that tradition. She recently graduated from SUNY Upstate Medical University with a master of science degree in physician assistant studies. As she prepares for the board exams in a couple months, she's completing rotations at Samaritan Medical Center here in Watertown. We appreciate Sarah jumping on the podcast to talk about her Youth Philanthropy Council experience and how it has impacted her. Thanks for being here.

Sarah VE.: Thanks for having me.

Max DelSignore: Was it a forgone conclusion that a career in healthcare or medicine was in your future?

Sarah VE.: Absolutely. Growing up surrounded by it and being immersed in the ins and outs of healthcare and the responsibility it takes to maintain a career in healthcare, I remember as a kid I would always go into the hospital with my dad to say hi to his patients and absolutely loved it.

Max DelSignore: Were there any particular moments, visits when you were with your father or maybe even with your grandfather, stories he would tell that really said, "Yes, this is definitely it for me."

Sarah VE.: I don't know if it was one particular moment, but it was definitely the feeling of walking into the hospital and talking to his patients and seeing the respect and the trust that his patients put into him as part of their healthcare and their well-being and kind of being in charge of that. It was definitely attractive to me.

Max DelSignore: Was there ever a time when you thought you'd choose a different path?

Sarah VE.: Honestly no. I always knew I wanted to do a path in healthcare. It was just which path I would take. I debated nursing. I debated going to medical school. I debated going to PA school, doing research, but I always knew that it was that avenue that I wanted to take.

Max DelSignore: Being a PA is what you've selected and you're full speed ahead with it.

Sarah VE.: Yes.

Max DelSignore: No regrets?

Sarah VE.: No regrets. No regrets.

Max DelSignore: You were given the opportunity to serve on YPC for two years.

- Sarah VE.: Yes.
- Max DelSignore: What do you remember about in particular being in that boardroom with your classmates in that particular setting?
- Sarah VE.: I remember that I was definitely naïve before starting becoming a board member on YPC. I didn't know the blight and the need of the community that I had grown up in and to be able to be surrounded by a group of my peers and all kind of be there together and be educated on the different organizations and needs of our community and to be able to have the opportunity to make an impact on these different organizations and community members was absolutely humbling and rewarding.
- Max DelSignore: Is there an organization in particular that as you reflect back that you remember or even a grant that you decided on as a council?
- Sarah VE.: An organization that stood out to me that I remember poignantly was an organization that was led by Credo provides assistance to mothers who either had children or who are pregnant and who are recovering addicts. They came to us asking for money for just basic supplies such as cribs, formulas, stuff to take care of children. I remember being affected by that because at the time, my high school class... My junior year in high school we had a lot of girls who were pregnant who had babies of their own.
- Sarah VE.: I remember kind of connecting the two and feeling like if we're able to help this end of the spectrum, maybe I can provide assistance one day to all the young mothers in my high school class who were my friends and my peers. I was really able to relate the community aspect of it to my peer aspect.
- Max DelSignore: What did YPC teach you about yourself?
- Sarah VE.: It taught me the importance of philanthropy and giving back. I learned that philanthropy it's a perpetual motion machine. By lifting up others around you, you hope to inspire others to do the same. It taught me the responsibility of those fortunate enough to have means to share it with others. Being a community member, it taught me to be a community member that strives to give back in all facets and areas of life. It really was inspiring to be part of a community where I'm able to help make a change in both small and large ways depending on the circumstance. It doesn't always have to be a monetary donation. You can give your time, give your insight. Other things than just money.
- Max DelSignore: Right. You're spending some time at home doing these rotations at the local hospital. I would imagine you're seeing the community in a different light than you did when you were in high school. What are some of the things that you

notice more about your community now because of the access you have in helping these patients?

Sarah VE.: Yeah, so absolutely. To be in a different position than I was as a high school student learning about members in my community, as a student in the healthcare world, you learn so much about the most intimate parts of the patient's lives. They share with you basically all of their secrets, all of their inner thoughts because there's nothing more important than that when you're trying to provide somebody the right and appropriate care.

Sarah VE.: But I definitely learned that there will always be such an immense need for education to be able to take the time to explain to my patients why you're doing something, what's going on in your body, the thought process of why you're taking this medication versus this medication, to be able to have the patients and take the time to really make sure that your patients walk away feeling satisfied and really understand what's going on with them.

Max DelSignore: What inspires you to give?

Sarah VE.: I think I am inspired to give back to the community starting with my family. I grew up in a household where giving and volunteering and being available to give back was kind of a foundation of how we were raised, my brother and I. Both my parents give back in different ways. My mom gives her time. She's part of such a vast amount of community activities and then my dad gives back obviously in ways of healthcare. But I'm also inspired by... Especially being on YPC, I remember being inspired by my Mrs. Sprague. She was kind of our member as being charter members of YPC. She's just such an avid active powerful member of our community.

Sarah VE.: She is inspiring to me, and she makes me want to continue kind of her legacy and what she's done for everybody both the youth and for the board. She's an educator. She was quite the popular educator at Watertown. Everybody loved her.

Max DelSignore: English teacher, right?

Sarah VE.: English teacher, yes, yup. She was head of the yearbook. She's an active member in our church. She is just a wonderful person all around. She's definitely somebody I look up to and strive to kind of follow in her footsteps especially in this community.

Max DelSignore: Mrs. Emily Sprague. She's definitely a good model-

Sarah VE.: She is.

Max DelSignore: ...to emulate.

Sarah VE.: She is.

Max DelSignore: That's a really good one. If given the chance to volunteer or help any organization in this community let's say but it can't be tightly affiliated to healthcare, where do you think you'd want to help?

Sarah VE.: I would choose to help in the schools. Going to public school, I feel like I was exposed to everything, all walks of life, all levels of education, all economic backgrounds. There's definitely a desperate need of just especially in the younger grade schools of basic education and care and love and really the fundamental parts of what it takes to become a successful adult one day, to learn the basics of what it means to be a functioning member of society. If I could choose anything else, I would go back into education and give my time there especially to the little ones to give them a boost.

Max DelSignore: Do you believe you're a philanthropist?

Sarah VE.: I believe I'm a philanthropist in the time that I've given back so far. I'm looking forward to one day having the means to give back monetarily once I'm finished with school and a real member of society. But I think even just on rotations, taking an extra second to ask my patient how they're doing or explain to them maybe in ways that are in layman's terms what's kind of going on with them and like I said, taking that extra moment to make sure that everybody feels comfortable and taken care of and loved. I try to be a philanthropist in just little ways throughout the day.

Max DelSignore: Last question, what advice would you share with future YPC students who are going to be going to the program for the first time?

Sarah VE.: Just how important it is to be an active member of your community, to be aware of all the different organizations, the different groups that are a fundamental part of the overall operation of the well-being of Northern New York. It's important to learn about each of these group's needs and then to be tasked with the responsibility of allocating such an impactful amount of money to these groups is just so humbling, so rewarding and something that you will carry with you and will resonate with you throughout your career and just the rest of your life.

Max DelSignore: We hope your appreciation for this area remains steadfast and your philanthropic interest connect to the place that you call home. We know you'll take great care of everyone in your field and best of luck in your future endeavors and for sharing time on the podcast, Sarah.

Sarah VE.: Thank you. I really appreciate you having me here.

Max DelSignore: It's a pleasure to sit down now with Sara Glover, a Watertown High School graduate who is now a special education teacher for Monroe 1 in Fairport, New York. Sara served one or two years on Youth Philanthropy Council.

Sara G.: It started my senior year of high school.

Max DelSignore: Started your senior year, so 2010, 2011 for you?

Sara G.: 2012-

Max DelSignore: 2012.

Sara G.: ...was when it started I believe.

Max DelSignore: You were kind of there at the beginning.

Sara G.: Yeah.

Max DelSignore: But it's great to have you here. Thanks for coming on the podcast.

Sara G.: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Max DelSignore: Your career is in special education.

Sara G.: Yes.

Max DelSignore: Is that something you always wanted to do or how did you decide on pursuing special ed?

Sara G.: Sure. When I was in high school, I knew that I wanted to go into school for education, but I wasn't sure exactly what realm of education. I was also involved in Stage Notes. When I graduated from high school, I decided that I wasn't going to go away right out of high school. I was going to stay here. I got my associates degree from JCC that following year. At the same time, I worked with Ticia (Marra), who's the artistic director Stage Notes. We decided to start a youth Stage Notes, Stage Notes Junior it was called, and that was where I was thinking this is really what I want to do. I want to work with young kids. I want to be a teacher.

Sara G.: Then, I decided to go to Geneseo. They have a program there that's childhood and special education together. I have some experience from high school and even middle school volunteering with kids who have disabilities. I have some family members who fall in that category. It was just always something that was really important to me. The more experience I got with it at Geneseo, the more I realized that was really what I wanted to do.

- Max DelSignore: If you look at people that you admire and the way they give back, not including your parents or family members or people you're close to, is there one particular individual or person that you say, "Boy, I really admire the way they give to their community."
- Sara G.: Sure. It would be Ticia. I think just going through high school, being a part of Stage Notes and seeing the way that giving back through something that you love like theater can be such a big help to the community and can build such a sense of that community is really important. It was really something that helped me grow as a student, as a person. That's just something that I really look back on and I talk about all the time. It's something I still come back and support Stage Notes as much as I can. I stopped into the rehearsal last night just to say "hi!" just because that's my family, but that's also being able to help the community through something that is so important to me.
- Sara G.: Seeing her build that from the ground up was so incredible and to be a part of something like that was fantastic.
- Max DelSignore: What was the Youth Philanthropy Council experience like for you?
- Sara G.: I love that question. I was thinking about it when you sent us some of the questions. Looking back when we came into it, we kind of had no idea what it was going to entail. It was really fun to, A, start it from the ground up, kind of building the foundation for the group, and then being on a board like that, on a council was not something I had experience with, so that definitely was a really important experience for me. I definitely feel like it helped me kind of grow as a person kind of in leadership and just to set that ground work for something that is still going on is really awesome.
- Max DelSignore: You just mentioned leadership is one of the ways that you experienced some growth going through the program. Anything else in particular that as you again reflect back how YPC might have shaped you individually?
- Sara G.: Sure. I think working with your peers especially in high school is something that can be really difficult and really daunting as a student. That was really great too is working with the people that I see every day. We play sports together. We do shows together. But working in the way that we were with YPC was very different from how you function in a high school. Being on that board and making those decisions together was a really cool experience I think for all of us.
- Max DelSignore: Do you feel like you're a philanthropist today?
- Sara G.: I do. I feel like I still have a lot of room to grow in that. I feel like there's still a lot that I'm looking to do more of. I try to be as involved as I can, but I want to do more always if that makes sense. I feel like I give back more to my students than I do right now to my community. I come back here and support as much as I can,

but I'm definitely still looking for more ways to give back. In the community I live in, I recently started working... Not working with, but volunteering for a program called Challenger Baseball that I got involved with through one of my students.

Sara G.: That's something that's really important to me now, but I'm still looking for more ways to give get involved and to be a philanthropist.

Max DelSignore: What is Challenger Baseball?

Sara G.: Challenger Baseball is a baseball program and it's designed for students with disabilities. Depending on where you are, they have different areas of it, but usually it's a student with a disability. They can be (kindergarten) through 21, and then they get a buddy and you play baseball.

Max DelSignore: In your position with BOCES in Monroe County and being immersed in education, you get a chance to see or get a glimpse of some community needs that maybe others in the general public don't get a chance to.

Sara G.: Sure.

Max DelSignore: What are some of the needs that you identify with that you feel are really important?

Sara G.: I think that supporting the families, especially with students who have disabilities, is really important. There are a lot of resources out there, but they don't always know that they are. Finding those resources and making sure that they're available to the families and to the students so that they are getting what they need, it helps the student both educationally and the family as a whole. It just ends up being a better situation for everybody. The more support the family can have, the better off it will be.

Max DelSignore: Was there ever another area or career that was of interest to you outside of education?

Sara G.: I thought about music for a long time. Even in college, my second major was vocal performance. It's still something that's really important to me. In the future, I would love to have a theater company of some kind that's designed or geared more towards students with disabilities. That's kind of a long-term goal of mine, but it's still something that's important to me.

Max DelSignore: What did you love most about the North Country?

Sara G.: The people. The sense of community when I come back here is absolutely impeccable and it's something I feel every single time I come. It doesn't matter what I'm coming here for, the people are just fantastic. You can tell that

everybody is so passionate about where they live, and they really care about what goes on here and how to always make things better. That's something that I don't know that you find in a lot of places.

Max DelSignore: Somebody asked the question about what the best kept secret in the North Country might be. In the eyes of Sara Glover, what do you think that is?

Sara G.: The best kept secret of the North Country, I think there is more here than people realize. You come to the North Country and you can kind of get a little bit of everything. You can go out to the country and go to a farm. You can kind of get the city feel. You can go to the river. You can go to the lake. There's everything here that you could possibly need within 20 minutes of the center.

Max DelSignore: Is there a particular place that you appreciate the most? I mean you mentioned some geography there.

Sara G.: Sure.

Max DelSignore: Is there one place that you enjoy?

Sara G.: I grew up going to my grandmother's cottage in Sackets Harbor. Sackets Harbor has always been really important to me.

Max DelSignore: Now that you're in your twenties, what advice can you share with future members of Youth Philanthropy Council who much like you will be kind of going in something brand new and fresh and not know what to expect the very first time around?

Sara G.: I think that it's important not to hold back. If there's anything that you feel really passionate about, just go for it. Use your voice to help the community as much as you can and really just go for it. If you're finding that something is important to you, then roll with that.

Max DelSignore: How do you plan to serve the community where you live?

Sara G.: Like I said, Challenger Baseball is something that I recently started doing. I'm looking to get more involved with that. I am constantly looking for ways to give back to the students that I work with, whether it's supporting them in something they do outside of school or supporting the others students in the building with anything like that. I think just supporting every organization in the community as much as you can whether that be like local stores or things that other schools have going on, just supporting organizations as much as you can. Then like I mentioned before, I really do hope to start some sort of theater company for students with disabilities.

Max DelSignore: I'm going to ask you this question, if you could volunteer in your community, any organization but it can't be tied to education or in this case the arts, where do you think you would want to help?

Sara G.: I think as far as volunteering in my community, there's a really strong need for volunteering with people who have mental health struggles. I think that that's something that especially now is so important, but people talk about it and people say, "Oh, we need help with this. Oh, we need help with that," but they don't do anything about it. I think volunteering in that community would be really helpful especially in Rochester and anywhere. I think that there's a really strong for that.

Max DelSignore: Sara, thanks for sharing some time with us. We hope YPC was a great experience to kind of get your philanthropy started. Hopefully that giving spirit of yours can impact the North Country even more into the future. We really appreciate you being on the podcast.

Sara G.: Thank you for having me.

Max DelSignore: Our last conversation is with Dominic Uliano. Dom graduated from Le Moyne College in 2018 with the degree in English Literature and Creative Writing. He spent the past year as a tenth and eleventh grade history teacher at Immaculate Heart Central School. The next chapter will start in Thailand this fall where he will teach English as a foreign language and hopefully join a pro soccer team. Dom will offer takeaways from his Youth Philanthropy Council experience and how it influenced his volunteerism in college, as well as his professional pursuits. Dom, thanks for being here.

Dominic U.: Thanks for having me.

Max DelSignore: Tell us, how did you decide on going to Thailand?

Dominic U.: Well, that was quite the path. Chris Rowland and me, we sat down with our good friend Bob McCain, elder Scottish gentlemen that we play soccer with, and he just told us about how he went over there traveling and he loved it. He'd been offered a few pro contracts there and some tryouts. He never really bid on any of them. He had a girlfriend and came back and didn't really go for it. In the car the next day, Chris and I are driving around and jokingly he said, "Oh, we should go over to Southeast Asia and play soccer." I was like, "Ha, ha. Yeah. Good one." Then we kind of looked at each other and it kind of clicked. We said, "We should go play soccer in Thailand."

Dominic U.: From there, at first everyone thought it was a joke. Just like a running... No one gets out of here. They stay. No one goes to Southeast Asia especially. If you leave, maybe you go down to Syracuse or Rochester. But basically we set our goal and it's coming to fruition now.

- Max DelSignore: The teaching opportunity is that essentially set and the soccer is kind of the complimentary piece here that you're hoping to secure?
- Dominic U.: Yeah. Luckily Bob did us a huge favor and he has a friend in Hong Kong that has teaching English opportunities all over the place. He helped us out. There's also a course in Thailand on the island of Phuket, which we're trying to go to, that offers the English foreign language certificate and that pretty much guarantees you a job teaching because the Thai ministry is really looking to bolster their education right now, especially with English and the cultural diffusion and how important that is to business.
- Max DelSignore: Your degree from Le Moyne was focused on English literature and creative writing. Do you have a favorite piece or two that has stuck with you or impacted you in a specific way?
- Dominic U.: I have so many. So many.
- Max DelSignore: It's tough to choose.
- Dominic U.: The one that sticks out the most from my career was "Self-Reliance" by Ralph Waldo Emerson. That's basically because it was this awesome moment where I was a freshman in this class that this professor really gave me a hard time. I thought I was the crap and all that. She really put me in my place and showed me that I wasn't all that. Then senior year, she decided to be my mentor and really helped with my honor's thesis which was on that piece and that was really hard. She pushed me to my limits, but it basically just was that cornerstone from my career at Le Moyne. Just coming in with a mindset from Watertown, New York and then getting a much broader sense of community and hard work and all that.
- Max DelSignore: You got to experience the Community Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council for one year in high school. What did you learn about your community from that experience?
- Dominic U.: I didn't know my community at all before that. Being at IHC until tenth grade and then switching over, I didn't think poverty was real. Not real. I didn't think that there were any problems really in the town. I thought everyone just goes to their jobs and does their thing, but it just opened my eyes completely really. It taught me how to communicate with other people. I mean at IHC, you see the same people from the time you're four years old all the way through high school. I had to reacclimate and learn how to present myself. I got a fresh start too which was nice.
- Max DelSignore: When you say transition, IHC to Watertown High School, correct?

Dominic U.: To Watertown, yes. By doing that, it gave me I think all of my social skills really. I don't know if I really developed any of them beforehand.

Max DelSignore: Are there any particular organizations or projects from the program experience that you recall or perhaps organizations that you might follow now because of being in YPC?

Dominic U.: Yeah. Actually I almost worked for Cornell Cooperative over at Camp Wabasso. It didn't end up working out, but I always followed them because they were the ones I talked about at the meeting. They brought they wanted two paddle boards. It taught me that also philanthropy wasn't just giving to people in like dire need. It was this cultural enhancement that we always talk about and that I didn't think was part of philanthropy beforehand. I follow them pretty closely. I like a lot of the stuff that they do.

Dominic U.: I think they do some awesome things for kids in the summer. In the area, there's not always that much to do in the summer.

Max DelSignore: We peel back a layer or two. You say cultural enhancement. What's that definition of that phrase mean to you?

Dominic U.: Oh boy. Basically all the stuff that isn't medical or health or food, the immediate needs. It's like that second tier on the hierarchy of needs that what do you do once you've satisfied all of those other things, how are you not bored during the day, how do you keep the culture, how do you revive Watertown and the North Country. I think previously in years it was low. Now I think it's starting to get to a really good place.

Max DelSignore: You mentioned that YPC also positioned you for an opportunity to serve on the committee at Le Moyne that you thought was pretty important. Share a little bit more about that story.

Dominic U.: Sure. Freshman year I came in and saw a poster on the wall for this organizational and financial review committee. I applied on a whim. I think I was the only freshman accepted that year and they said it was entirely because of my experience on YPC. They didn't even interview me. Actually they just hired me right on.

Max DelSignore: What was it that they noticed just in that application with-

Dominic U.: I wrote-

Max DelSignore: ...that being on there?

Dominic U.: ...I got to distribute a huge amount of money to people and a huge organization trusted me with that and that I knew how to like balance not necessarily a

budget, but figure out how to spread money across a few different organizations. That was really the exact thing that they did just with clubs in the school.

Max DelSignore: One of the things you did too, Dom, is you actually went back to the Community Foundation and interned between breaks while you were at Le Moyne. What do you believe is the value of a community foundation to this region?

Dominic U.: I think it shows that the region is just more than a stopping place before the Thousand Islands especially because I know that's what the sign says on Arsenal Street, "The Gateway to the Thousand Islands," as if it's just a place to stop through, but it shows that like there's a culture here now. That we're not just a couple factory jobs and a couple high schools and what that is. Basically I think it shows that the community cares about the other people in the community. I think that every growing community like the sign of that is a community foundation.

Max DelSignore: Is there anything that you remember from your time helping at the Community Foundation that kind of raised your awareness to or impress you with what the organization does?

Dominic U.: Yeah. I think just the sheer number of people that came in to meet with you. I mean you always had meetings with people that wanted to give back in some way. A lot of stay anonymous, but I think a lot of them there's so many more than most people realize that care about this community. I think you see your (things) on the TV and what not, but there's a lot of people behind the scenes making sure that this community stays afloat.

Max DelSignore: Outside of your parents and family, is there one individual or more than one that you admire in the way that they give to the community?

Dominic U.: Yeah. I would have to say... Well, Mrs. Sprague when I was in high school, Emily Sprague now to me. She's made me call her by her first name, but she just showed me... She's a philanthropist in all aspects of her life. I mean every day at school. I mean I'm sure she could have gone to a high profile job and made a ton of money, but she stayed at Watertown for so many years and helped kids after school. She showed like yes, she has the ability to give financially, but also she gave her time, which I think to some people is more valuable than their dollars.

Max DelSignore: Are there characteristics that Mrs. Sprague possesses that you try or hope to emulate yourself?

Dominic U.: Yeah. I don't know if I'll ever be able to do it quite the way she does, but she has such a big personality, such a big loving personality in the way that she'll get you to do something you just don't even want to do and be happy about it. I hope that I can do that to the people around me because it's such a great quality for a

leader to be able to invigorate the people that are around them even if they don't want to do the work.

Max DelSignore: How do you view this community now compared to the way you looked at it as a high school student?

Dominic U.: As a high school student, I think a good majority of people looked at it the way that I did, just get out. It's cold. There's not much for you here. I think a lot of adults said that to us too. Get out of here. I think my mindset on it has changed. I know I'm leaving so that's ironic, but I definitely have plans on coming back after. I think get out for a little while, go learn about the world, but come back and give back because this community gave me so much that I was definitely not appreciative of when I was a student. But now looking back, it's a great place to grow up really. It provides a lot of things that in other cities or places across the US you just don't get.

Max DelSignore: When did you realize that you were a philanthropist?

Dominic U.: I didn't realize I think until YPC because I had volunteered beforehand, but I didn't really consider that. One, I didn't know what the word philanthropy meant. You couldn't really know that until you understand the definition. But once I did, I think I realized that a lot of people give back. If they're told that too, then maybe they'll have a different mindset on what philanthropy is and that they matter to the community because I don't know if the volunteerism is portrayed enough in the community because a lot of people give a lot of time and effort and of course money too. I think it was, yeah, about that 17 year old range.

Dominic U.: I don't think a lot of people realize that until much later. I think YPC is probably the number one reason why I understood that.

Max DelSignore: It's a good transition to the last question, which is how has YPC in participation, all the other volunteer opportunities that you've been involved with changed how you plan to give back to community in the future?

Dominic U.: I think whenever I have a chance, I'll give back. I think beforehand I was gung ho to, "How is that my problem? I'll get out of here. Do whatever like serves me," but I think it's flipped that entirely on its head because realizing that without all of these people that had helped me when I was a kid in this community, if you don't take that role on when they're gone, it won't be there for the next generation. I think that's really unfair to do. I think partly responsibility and then accountability, but also they did it in a way for me that it just made me want to do that. It doesn't feel like a chore really. It feels like something I enjoy doing.

Max DelSignore: Thanks for all that great insight, Dom. As you prepare to head overseas, continue to share that philanthropic spirit with others in need and we hope the

impact can continue here in the North Country down the road. You said you're going to come back, so I hope that comes true.

Dominic U.: I will.

Max DelSignore: We appreciate you being on the podcast.

Dominic U.: Thanks for having me.

Max DelSignore: We hope you enjoyed this edition of the Northern New York Community Podcast. The podcast is made possible thanks to our partners, WPBS and the Northern New York Community Foundation. Remember, every interview is easy to access and always free, whether it's online or on your mobile device. You can find the podcast on iTunes, Spotify, Google Play or other podcast platforms when you search for the Northern New York Community Podcast. We also have a website for the podcast. Listen anytime to other conversations which also feature interview highlights, transcripts, photo galleries and more. Just go to nncypodcast.com.

Max DelSignore: Our sincere thanks to Sara Glover, Marcus Lavarney, Sarah Van Eenenaam and Dominic Uliano for coming on the podcast. Please join us again next time for another edition of the Northern New York Community Podcast.