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SPEAKERS

Kasey Stevens, Larry Crum, Matt Hayes, Brian Casto



Kasey Stevens 00:01

Hello and welcome to the One of the Herd podcast, the official podcast of the Marshall University Alumni Association. On this episode of One of the Herd, we are chatting with Brian Casto, West Virginia studies teacher at Milton Middle School in Milton, West Virginia. In September, Brian was named the 2022 West Virginia Teacher of the Year. Stay tuned to hear how Brian is making West Virginia history a little easier for everyone to learn. And as always, before we get to the interview, let's check in with our alumni staff for an update of what's new on campus. Welcome back to the One of the Herd podcast. We're here for the staff chat with Matt, Larry and myself. So Matt, fill us in a little bit on first generation college student week. What was that like on campus?



Matt Hayes 00:49

Oh, it was fantastic. What a great opportunity to recognize and build community within our Marshall family around our first generation students in Marshall touts a pretty high percentage of first gen college students on our campus each year. And that translates to a great number of first generation alumni out in the world as well. So we are working very hard to build community and connections and affinity around this population of our Marshall family. The week was filled with great events, the students came out there was a banner to sign, they made buttons that you could put on your shirt and declare yourself as a first gen student. There were great opportunities for students to connect with mentors and hear from other first gen, former first gen students, first gen alumni now out working in the professional world and making a big difference. And it was an impactful week for everybody.



Larry Crum 01:51

Yeah I count myself among the the group of first gens it was, it's an interesting, it's an interesting group to be a part of, because there's some unique challenges with being a first generation student and the fact that there's not a lot of, you know, there's not a lot of people to lean on, you're learning a lot of this for the first time. I mean, I had I had a great support

system, but it was it was, you know, dive headfirst in myself. So it's really neat to see this focus on, you know, recognizing these students and what they're going through and connecting them with alumni that had a had a similar experience. Because, you know, we've talked a lot about, you know, it's a it's a unique community, these first gen students, first gen alumni, and your legacy students, it's two different groups, but they have such a, they've had their own unique experiences at Marshall, and are just, you know, they're there, they have unique connections to Marshall.

M Matt Hayes 02:45

Exactly. And, you know, I think back to when, you know, I had family in Huntington, when I when I was a student here, my mother is originally from Huntington. So you know, Huntington was not a strange place, but being a college student, for the first time in your, in your family is a whole new experience. And I just remember my parents saying, you know, son, if you have questions, find somebody to ask, because, you know, but but they were they were there and they had my back the whole time. But it's a different experience when you don't have the the parental or grandparent or aunt, uncle, alumni or alumnus come in a room, put an arm around you and saying, Hey, this is how this works. And you're figuring everything out for yourself the first time through.

L Larry Crum 03:28

It's my understanding that you could have an honor society for for first time students.

M Matt Hayes 03:32

That's right. And alumni can protect participate as well. It's, it's going to it's a bit available, it's called Tri Alpha. And that is is available, and there will be events coming up in the near future in the years ahead. So everybody stay tuned and watch for those announcements coming very soon.

L Larry Crum 03:50

Yeah, that's really the Kasey you've talked about. There's there's even a form on the HerdAlum website. People can go on there and kind of, you know, self identify as being a first gen student talk about their experience and kind of, you know, connect with some of these students that are that are going through, you know, being a first gen student.

K Kasey Stevens 04:08

Right, and we would love to share some of those first gen stories by going to our website, HerdAlum.com and there's a form there you can fill out to share your first gen story. And that just kind of gives advice to students helps connect them, let them know they're not alone, like being the first in your family to do anything significant. Especially going to college in a strange place. So I think it really helps, like make Marshall more of a family community. Absolutely. And

so speaking of Marshall family, we lost a great member of the Marshall family this past week. Legendary baseball coach Jack cook passed away. He was the winningest department coach for the baseball team with 422 career wins.

L

Larry Crum 04:52

Yeah 1994 Hall of Fame and Athletic Hall of Fame inductee. You know Jack took Marshall to two NCAA tournaments. They came within one win of the College World Series in 1978. Man, he just left a great legacy here at Marshall. He's one of those, those coaches, you know, you hear Bobby Pruitt and there's just names that are synonymous with with, with Marshall University with specific programs. Jack is one of those guys. And what's been neat is that there's been a renewed interest in talk about Jack recently with, with all this the the discussion of the new baseball stadium coming. And, you know, with that momentum there was, you know, Jack's been around and, you know, they've been in the talks again, people have been, you know, bringing him up, and it was just so sad, you know, to hear the his passing because he made such a such an impact at Marshall.

M

Matt Hayes 05:45

Yeah, he did. How, how nice would it have been for Coach Cook to see this new stadium built and to have the, the tribute, you know, have his name represented, you know, to take the Herd to a conference title on 81. And to win Coach of the Year Coach of the Year in 89. Just a career fraught with accolades, left and right, up and down. We're really going to miss Coach Cook, and we're so grateful for his contributions.

L

Larry Crum 06:18

Yeah, I agree.

K

Kasey Stevens 06:19

I saw a lot of his former players were able to come in town recently to celebrate his life and get together and I thought that was really beautiful. That, you know, these guys are still like, teammates in life.

M

Matt Hayes 06:29

Very connected.

L

Larry Crum 06:29

Yeah, Marshall has a pretty good baseball history. I mean, a lot of people don't necessarily know that history because of just not having that baseball stadium here on campus. And but there's, there's quite a few people that have, you know, gone on to the majors and, you know,

been very successful in baseball careers. And, yeah, he just, he had a great legacy here at Marshall.

M

Matt Hayes 06:50

and think about how impactful the program could have been, or could be if we had a stadium. Yeah, I mean, let's build this thing already.

L

Larry Crum 06:56

Let's it done.

K

Kasey Stevens 06:59

So speaking of success, one, successful, and I would say, very classy event that the three of us got to attend earlier November, groundbreaking for the Brad D. Smith Center for Business and Innovation on Fourth Avenue. The F flats were the most recent apartment building complex there. It's been home to a lot of places during the years. But now it's an empty lot. Very classy event, as we mentioned. I just was very excited. There was a lot of, you know, good energy about what was to come there.

M

Matt Hayes 07:35

Yeah, there sure was. And, you know, they did it right, you know, in a empty field. It just just a plot of land that is nothing but gravel and dirt, they erected a real nice tent. So we were inside, we were out of the cool air, you know, and, but it was a great program, a lot of great speakers. Just just a great time for the Marshall family to celebrate this. And, you know, thinking of the leadership that President Gilbert has, has offered, you know, he was there. Of course, you know, President Elect Brad D. Smith was on hand. It was such an exciting time. But all the other folks that have played such an integral role in making this dream a reality, were on hand to celebrate and kick this thing off.

L

Larry Crum 08:25

If people haven't watched the Exploring Marshall episode we did for homecoming, the episode that opens up the block, the Marshall Rises episode, now would be a good time, it's on the Marshall Alumni YouTube channel, go back and watch that because the opening scene shows Matt standing in the field. And when you when you watch that, you know, there's nothing special about it now. But here in a couple years, you're going to be able to watch that episode. And go, Hey, I remember when there was nothing there just a field, you know what I mean? And now it's going to be the state of the art facility that's going to bring in, you know, business and we're going to have students from all over the world just, you know, dying to come here it's going to be the more I read about what they're planning for it, it's going to be you know, I've said state of the art before, but it's going to be literally state of the art in everything they're doing. And there's people, there's there's individuals, alumni all around the country that are

just lining up to help support this program. They you know, they realize how much this is going to mean to Marshall. And they're just like, so they're lined up down the street to give back to Marshall and be a part of this.

M

Matt Hayes 09:30

That's right. And the benefits aren't just for Marshall alone, because because this is benefiting Huntington over by the development that's taking place along Fourth Avenue between campus and downtown, where the Center for Business Innovation is going to be it's going to bridge everything so you know pulling campus even closer, to Pullman Pullman square and all the activity of downtown with the visual arts center and so much growth to our campus. We're going to continue to see Fourth Avenue thrive, biz, other businesses, apartments coming in restaurants or other retailers, it's going to transform that corridor entirely.

L

Larry Crum 10:11

Yeah. What's neat is, you know, every generation of students that's come through here has a memory and an experience of what Marshall was to them, you know, to some of the older generations, it was just the campus, it was that block of campus. And then some of us have got to experience, you know, Pullman Square being being built and what that means. And then the Visual Arts Center, and the growth across the street. And now Stephen J. Kopp Hall going up, Hal Greer Boulevard, and now we're going to have this facility that's eventually going to get Marshall, you know, connected all the way down to Pullman square. So Marshall is going to be you know, Huntington, and Marshall are essentially going to be even more one. And that's just, that's an exciting thought.

M

Matt Hayes 10:50

It really is.

K

Kasey Stevens 10:51

Absolutely. And that building is set to be finished construction in fall 2023, and then open for classes in spring of 2024, which seems to be you know, moving along very quickly. Now, I don't know about you, but it's a little cloudy out right now. But we do have sunshine on this cloudy day,

M

Matt Hayes 11:13

There is sunshine on the horizon.

K

Kasey Stevens 11:14

Yes, there is. And that sunshine we're talking about is our move to the Sunbelt Conference,

we're slated to join the League no later than July 1, 2023. So what do you guys think about that?

M

Matt Hayes 11:28

Well, I'm excited about it. I think there, there's a lot of great opportunity for us. You look at the the regionality of this conference, and how close our sister institutions will be and how the proximity of travel for away games, I think our alumni, local alumni are going to love it. We travel well, to away games anyway. But looking at where these other institutions live, we have high concentrations of alumni living in those areas. So this, this is just a win win and a great way to bring more of the Marshall family together.

L

Larry Crum 12:04

Yeah, when I saw the list of potential conferences for us to go to, this is one that I really had my eye on. It's a conference that's been growing through the years, it has a lot of strong teams, especially in football, I mean, they're strong in a lot of different sports, basketball. But you know, football wise, there's some really incredible, you know, talented programs. And like I said, some of these old rivalries that we're going to, you know, resurrect, we're going to be, you know, joining up with Appalachian State. I'm excited for some new new schools coming in, like JMU. You know, we're bringing Old Dominion over with us from Conference USA, Southern Miss is coming over from Conference USA. And, you know, we're gonna get to go to Coastal Carolina, everybody loves going to Myrtle Beach. So we, you know, we've got a really strong chapter down there, and having that opportunity to, to go to some of these areas, and grow the alumni. You know, the chapter and the involvement is gonna be really exciting.

M

Matt Hayes 12:57

Absolutely, absolutely.

K

Kasey Stevens 13:00

Fantastic. And so speaking of more changes coming to campus, I would like to chat about Brad D. Smith becoming our president elect. So he will serve as our 38th, president of the university. And I think that is a really exciting thing. He's going to start serving as our president at the beginning of 2022, January 1. But I think, as we know him, Brad from Kenova, Intuit Brad, like, we're really excited to have him on campus and the expertise that he brings here.

M

Matt Hayes 13:33

Oh, my goodness, yeah, it talks about a game changer. This is this is taking Marshall to greater heights. And we're so excited for what's on the horizon, looking at, you know, just so much of what he disseminated during his interviews with in sessions with the staff and in the receptions and other conversations on campus during the whole process. I was blown away. And you're

not not to diminish the talent and the ideas of the other candidates. There were some really great candidates in the search. But it Brad is the cream of the crop, and I'm thrilled to have him coming in as our next president.

L Larry Crum 14:19

Yeah, we're talking about a son of Marshall that graduated from here. Yep. went out into the world, you know, was incredibly, incredibly successful. He's continued to give back to the university. And now he's returning home. I mean, it's, it's, it's one of those it's a Hollywood story. Yeah

M Matt Hayes 14:35

It is. It is.

L Larry Crum 14:36

And he's, he's just done so much. And now he's coming home and giving back his time and talent, to Marshall to really grow what the university is what it can be, to help the students, to further you know, what we're doing with alumni. It's, it's just an exciting time to be here. I mean, there's so many, there's so much change. There's so much going on, but it's it's it's great. I mean, there's it's it's a wonderful time to be a part of Marshall.

M Matt Hayes 15:01

It really is it you know, thinking, thinking about the opportunities that lie ahead, Marshall's, Marshall's future is so bright is so bright. And for our alumni out there that are listening, you know, and wondering, you know, maybe maybe a bit concerned. Let me put that concern to rest and just stay tuned, stay stay in the game with us and just watch because things are gonna start happening real soon. It's all going to be great.

L Larry Crum 15:26

How about these last few months, we had the aviation the opening of the Bill Noe flight school, we have the groundbreaking for the for the business facility. We've got the Sunbelt Conference. We've got Brad coming on as president. There is a lot happening here right now.

M Matt Hayes 15:41

And we're not finished yet.

L Larry Crum 15:42

Not even close, not even close. All right. Fantastic. Thank you guys so much for chatting today. Stay tuned for our interview with West Virginia Teacher of the Year, Brian Casto.

B Brian Casto 15:57

I had a lot of people whenever I was a kid, that I respected who were educators and also people who were just teachers of other things, you know, like my Scoutmaster in Boy Scouts. And I really respected those people what they were able to do. And that kind of made me think to myself, maybe that's something that would want to do.

K Kasey Stevens 16:17

Awesome. And how many years have you been teaching in the Cabel County school system?

B Brian Casto 16:22

I have been teaching in Carroll County Schools for 13 years now.

K Kasey Stevens 16:25

And what kind of brought you to that? Where are you from originally.

B Brian Casto 16:28

So I'm originally from Madison, down on Boone County. And I went to Marshall, and I had intentions of going back to Boone County. But then I ended up hanging around. I really liked it here and got into Cabot County Schools, and I've been here ever since.

K Kasey Stevens 16:45

Fantastic, and what really inspired you to teach history rather than anything else.

B Brian Casto 16:51

So growing up, I always thought history is interesting. And I had a really good history teacher in high school. His name was Mr. Epling. And I still remember his class to this day, he did a lot of notes and a lot of discussion. But I really enjoyed that. And we had really good discussions. And I learned an awful lot in this class. And I think that history is just such a valuable tool to have. And I think a lot of people maybe don't appreciate it until after school. As you get older, I hear a lot of people say I wish I would have paid more attention in whatever history class they had growing up because they realize now as an adult, just how important is so I think that we can

learn a lot from it. It plays a role in our lives today, even thing that happened long, a long time ago. So I hope that I'm able to, to teach that to students the importance of it, that's why I like it so much.

K

Kasey Stevens 17:40

You're getting a little like YouTube, social media famous with West Virginia History in two minutes or less, to tell us a little bit about that.

B

Brian Casto 17:48

So it just kind of came out of really, uh, my wife, she heard me talking, complaining about how in West Virginia, there's not a lot of media out there that is helpful for teaching. There's not a lot of videos, I taught world history for nine years. And the hard part was figuring out which video clip to show because if you if you type in ancient Egypt, there are like over a million videos that pop up. And then you type in something for West Virginia History and you get one video and it's usually an older video that was probably once on VHS, and it's a moving picture with Smith Hocking, which I enjoy. But eighth graders aren't quite as easy to engage. So it really just happened at the perfect time. I started making these videos about a month before the pandemic really hit West Virginia. And all of a sudden other teachers started seeing them on Facebook and YouTube and started requesting videos. And they started sharing them out. And then the West Virginia Department of Education started using them for elementary school. And I'm like, wow, so it kind of just took off. And I never really thought it would I just wanted to make videos that made my class more interesting and fun for students. The feedback that I've gotten, I've had people who are no longer in West Virginia, who messaged me from other countries from other states saying that they really enjoy watching the videos, it reminds them of home. So it's pretty neat in that way. And also teachers using them and other students getting to watch them. That's that's kind of encouraging as well.

K

Kasey Stevens 19:22

That's awesome. I didn't know we'd have that big of a reach. And I don't know if you ever expected that either. Yeah.

B

Brian Casto 19:28

Yeah, I got a message once from someone in Colorado and they said that they they grew up in West Virginia and they haven't lived here like 30 years and they've been watching my videos and they really enjoy them. And I was like, Okay, well I'm glad you like them.

K

Kasey Stevens 19:42

Thank you like, subscribe, share.

B

Brian Casto 19:46

Exactly.

K

Kasey Stevens 19:48

So Brian, one of the reasons while we're why we're chatting this morning is the being awarded West Virginia Teacher of the Year. What was it like to be honored like that? Were you surprised, shocked?

B

Brian Casto 19:58

Through the whole process, I have been very surprised. Last year, whenever I found out that I won for our school, I was just like every teacher in the country, and we were all just trying to get that light at the end of the tunnel. You know, it was a very rough year. So we were all just hanging in there. And so it came as a surprise, everyone around me didn't seem surprised, which I guess is good to have such a great support system of family and friends that believe in me, but I wasn't expecting it. Because through the whole process through Kenny teacher, the year whenever they had the finalist, and the State Teacher of the Year finalist, reading through other people's biographies and what they've been doing and everything I, I had no clue that they were going to call my name. So when I heard my name, I was in shock. Didn't really know what to say. But it's very humbling. And probably, that about three hours after winning when I got home, going through texts and emails and Facebook messages and responding back to everyone who would congratulate me. So that was really neat.

K

Kasey Stevens 21:11

You are a product at the College of Education here on campus. Like a lot of, you know, other teachers that say, hang around in Cabell County, what advice would you give to someone wanting to be a teacher just starting out as maybe a freshman in those classes?

B

Brian Casto 21:25

I would say that, for one, it can be a little bit different, you know, going from that role of being the student to being the teacher, that's a, that can be a tough transition, like kind of figuring out how you fit in there. As a young teacher, if I could go back and tell myself some advice. One would be that you're going to, you're going to do some lessons that crash and burn. And that's okay. But but you don't know which one's working to try some that don't work. So don't be afraid to have activities and lessons that don't go as planned. Because, in my opinion, so the better assignments that I have, or assignments that that came out of something that I did that didn't go so well. So not being afraid to try those new things. But also just realizing that, and I've learned this through the years, you know, this is my 14th year teaching now. And I've learned that even when I didn't think that I was having an impact on students that I was. So you may not think starting out that you're making a difference that the kid in class, you don't think you're reaching, you're reaching. But I've had messages from students that I had 10 years ago that say like they they remember my class that I was always kind those kinds of things. It's

very encouraging. I wish would have done that, like, eight, nine years ago. But I think that it can be easy to get discouraged, because maybe you don't always feel like you're making a difference. But I think that's important people to realize that they are. And if they stick with it long enough, that they'll see that.

K

Kasey Stevens 23:00

That was some fantastic advice that almost makes me want to be a teacher. But that is not my gift. So we're gonna transition a little bit to more Marshall questions. You mentioned, you're from Boone County, Madison, what kind of brought you to Marshall, rather than another school in the area?

B

Brian Casto 23:16

So I liked that it was somewhat close to home that was about an hour and a half drive by my uncle's to my uncle's had attended Marshall University. And both of them really had good experiences there. So I had that. To lean on. I had some friends who also were already at Marshall. And I'd always heard great things about Marshall's education program. That's what they started out as was an education college. So I heard great things. And I wanted to see if that was where I was gonna fit. So I went there and really enjoyed it.

K

Kasey Stevens 23:45

Fantastic. And I know you have education degree, but what specific, like specialty?

B

Brian Casto 23:51

So I graduated with a social studies, five through 12 degree in education, and a minor in geography.

K

Kasey Stevens 23:59

Fantastic. And we know a little bit about your famous Marshall movie role. Is that your favorite Marshall memory? Or do you have a different one?

B

Brian Casto 24:08

So that was a really cool moment. And the professors at Marshall, especially Joe Geiger, who also works the Division of culture in Charleston, would be like, yeah, go do it. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. We can figure out your classwork later. That was a great memory. My favorite memory was actually meeting my wife and Marshall. We happen to have the same communications class together at Smith Hall. So I would always go to class early because she

had a class before our class. So I would just happen to be there about 30 minutes early, you know? So meeting my wife there. That was obviously a very nice experience. It's worked out quite well.

K

Kasey Stevens 24:51

Absolutely. And how has Marshall kind of helped you in your career?

B

Brian Casto 24:56

I had so many wonderful professors. While Marshall, both in the education building, as well as in other classes as well, I had a great English professor. I had great history professors like Dr. Mills, and Geiger, and so many others, Dr. Isaacs, and artists in the education building, and they were all very willing to spend extra time helping me get better things. I still remember going into Dr. Mills office during office hours, he said you could bring in, we could bring in our essay ahead of time, and he looked it over for us. So I take it down there and I think whenever I left now, it may have had more red ink on it than the printer eight from those black but sounds little a wake up call. But he took the time to read through it and, and give me really good feedback that made me better for us. I really appreciated all the extra time that professors put in when I was there. I didn't expect that. When I got to college, I've heard lots of things about how you're basically on your own. Figure it out. If you don't then bye bye, but that was not the situation while I was at Marshall.

K

Kasey Stevens 26:13

Fantastic. It's 10 fun quick questions to get to know our guests. We ask these for everyone we have on the podcast. So first one cast out is what is your favorite color? favorite colors blue? Your favorite class at Marshall.

B

Brian Casto 26:28

A favorite class at Marshall was West Virginia history, Joe Geiger.

K

Kasey Stevens 26:33

Big surprise, yeah. And your favorite professor at Marshall?

B

Brian Casto 26:41

Probably Dr. Mills because I had him the most. I got to know him quite well.

K

Kasey Stevens 26:47

Fantastic. Your favorite place to vacation?

B Brian Casto 26:51
Somewhere at the beach, anywhere that has the ocean and sand.

K Kasey Stevens 26:55
Your favorite thing about your career?

B Brian Casto 26:58
My favorite thing about my career is the the impact that it has on others.

K Kasey Stevens 27:03
Favorite musical artist?

B Brian Casto 27:05
The Beatles.

K Kasey Stevens 27:06
Okay, in that same vein, do you have a favorite song?

B Brian Casto 27:10
Let it be a favorite movie. I should say WeAre Marshall since but my favorite movie? That's a tough question. Oh my gosh, we got to edit this. Alright. Favorite movie? I'll go with Almost Famous.

K Kasey Stevens 27:28
Favorite book?

B Brian Casto 27:29
Probably 1776 by McCullough.

K Kasey Stevens 27:33
And favorite animal?

B Brian Casto 27:36
Sea turtle.

K Kasey Stevens 27:37
And Mr. Casto. Is there anything that I did not ask you in the interview that you want to make sure as mentioned or that you definitely want to include?

B Brian Casto 27:45
No, you ask all the good questions.

K Kasey Stevens 27:48
Okay good thank you. so much for tuning in to today's episode of One of the Herd. We hope you enjoyed this episode. And if so, leave us a review on Apple podcasts. If you have an idea for an episode, let us know by emailing us at alumni@marshall.edu. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at Marshall you alumni. Keep listening to our episodes available wherever you listen to podcasts.