

The Brave Files Podcast

Dhruv Pai: Empathy Scientist: How One Teenager Can Save the World.

Episode 158

Heather Vickery 0:04

Hi everyone, this is Heather Vickery and you have tuned in to The Brave Files Podcast. I just have to say this y'all our youth, they're going to save us and I can't wait for you to meet today's guest, Dhruv Pai. For many people COVID-19 ushered in a profound sense of loneliness, hopelessness, and even uselessness. But for this 16 year old young man, the pandemic was also an opportunity to help his community in an incredibly extraordinary way to roof got involved with volunteer clubs in middle school as a way to make new friends. And by the time the pandemic hit, in his sophomore year of high school, he was primed and ready to start his own non profit. Yep, you heard that right. This young man collaborated with some friends and founded his own nonprofit organization. It's called Teens Helping Seniors, you're going to hear all about it and learn all about it in the episode. But what started as a local operation in Montgomery County, Maryland is now an international nonprofit organization. And each chapter is completely run by teens. This is amazing. This kid is amazing what they're doing is amazing. And I'm really, really excited to share it with you. So let's go meet Dhruv.

Dhruv Pai 1:36

Curious, altruistic and innovative.

Heather Vickery 1:40

This is Heather Vickery. And you're listening to The Brave Files, stories from people living courageously. When we choose bravely and big and small ways, it powerfully elevates our lives. I hope these stories connect with you, and encourage you to embrace bravery in every possible way, day after day. Together, we can build a movement of courageous living that enriches both our lives and our communities. And if you enjoy the show, I asked you to please share it with others. Maybe think of someone who you want to choose bravely right alongside you. Thanks for tuning in. Now, here's the show. In case you were wondering, if I have the coolest job in the world, let me assure you I actually do. Why well, because I get to meet some of the most interesting brave people on the planet. And I get to share their stories with you. So we are now a full year into living through a pandemic. And through my coaching program, intentionally brave entrepreneurs. I've seen person after person get creative and inventive as hell. I've seen them struggle, reinvent and try again. I've seen folks support one another in unprecedented ways. And we have now even seen our youth stepping up in ways that I'm not sure we could have ever fully imagined. So for some people, that pandemic offered up opportunities that that they couldn't probably have imagined themselves stepping into prior to this. And so I'd like you to meet this week's guest Dhruv Pai. He is a student in the STEM magnet program in what's the name of your school Dhruv?

Dhruv Pai 3:25

Montgomery Blair High School.

Heather Vickery 3:28

In Silver Spring, Maryland. And he's also the co founder and president of the international nonprofit organization Teams Helping Seniors which is something that he formed during this Covid 19 crisis. The organization provides delivery of groceries and medications to seniors and vulnerable populations. Dhruv, I am very excited to have you here.

Dhruv Pai 3:52

Yeah, thank you so much. I'm excited to be here.

Heather Vickery 3:55

It was, took me a moment when we were first scheduling this, my assistant said, Oh, you've got to work with his school schedule. And I go, Yeah, you're saying that a lot these days, aren't you?

Dhruv Pai 4:05

Yeah. Luckily, online school isn't as much of a hassle.

Heather Vickery 4:08

Oh, that's helpful, for sure. So I'm going to admit that your resume is already quite impressive. What grade are you in?

Dhruv Pai 4:16

I'm a junior right now.

Heather Vickery 4:18

Okay, you're a junior, and have you always been been socially activated, volunteer fundraising oriented?

Dhruv Pai 4:26

I want to tell you, yes. But the truth is not so much, what especially in elementary and middle school, it was kind of difficult for me to get involved in public service, because it was a really daunting prospect for me. You know, when I heard the words public service, I always went to, you know, people like Doctors Without Borders and total heroes were out there just putting their lives on the line for the sake of other people. And I wasn't sure if I was ready to do something like that if I was ready to take on, you know, such a big responsibility at such a young age. And so, the truth is, it was difficult for me to start but I got involved with my local volunteering club at my school, not to volunteer at the beginning to tell you the truth, but just to meet new people and to get some friends. And for me, it was really just, you know, a gradual journey from, you know, one experience to the next transform from someone who didn't even know what public service meant to someone who loves public service and is willing to do it in his free time.

Heather Vickery 5:21

That's cool, and obviously very well rehearsed. So we're gonna get you out of your well rehearsed podcast, comfort zone just a little bit today. But you know what, I love that I, first of all,

volunteering and social services work is an incredible way to make friends. And it's something that I wish more people would think of in that capacity. The fact of the matter is, if we're really honest with ourselves, nothing's ever selfless. I ask about charity every week, in this and I believe in the importance of giving back and being involved, but we get something out of those involvements. Even if it's just new friends, right, or, and I shouldn't use the word just, it's a big deal.

Dhruv Pai 6:01

Exactly. The importance of, you know, making human connections during volunteering, like it cannot be understated. Because when I see people who are willing to volunteer, whether it's adults, whether it's, you know, preteens, whether it's my own peers, I don't see one person going to volunteer, I don't see one person signing up and saying, hey, I want to help out here by myself, can I can I can I work it out? I see groups of people, I see people who you know, want to meet new people who, you know, already have friends that they want to volunteer with. In my case, you know, I wanted to meet new people. That's why I signed up for volunteering. And so the fact that volunteering is a sort of group exercise, not only increases what we get out of it, because you know, we get to interact with other people, especially during a time like the pandemic when interacting with other people is hard. But it also increases the value of the volunteering, right? Because the more hands on deck, the more that it's truly the more the merrier, right? Because we can help more people.

Heather Vickery 7:00

Many hands make fast work is what my partner says that her mother used to tell her. Okay, well, so you were already involved in this type of extracurricular work. Once you hit high school freshmen sophomore year, is that right?

Dhruv Pai 7:15

Yeah. So I started in seventh or eighth grade, volunteering at local soup kitchens and homeless shelters. But that was kind of in a in a sort of followers role. You know, I was willing to be the so called sheep, you know, I was wanting to do what I was told. And obviously, there's nothing wrong with that. But I didn't really see the need, or I didn't really see the opportunity to do something like leadership when it came to volunteering until I hit high school. And until those opportunities were presented.

Heather Vickery 7:44

So did they present themselves to you? Or did you just happen to seek them out?

Dhruv Pai 7:48

Well, actually, they kind of came out of the blue, to tell you the truth. Um, so in eighth grade, I was volunteering with the Red Cross at my local hospital. And so it's this program called Volunteer. And so everyone in the program is teens. And we kind of help doctors out with their everyday tasks. We help veterans because it's a military hospital. Actually, towards the end of the program, one of the one of my friends who I met there, she approached me and said, Hey, I'm planning to start a nonprofit, and you seem like you're interested in that sort of thing. Would

you be willing to come on board and be something like a brand ambassador? And I was like, Well, what is that, I've ever heard of starting a nonprofit? To me, nonprofits are always these, you know, huge companies that had been well founded, they've existed for 50 or 100 years, they've been doing their duty for a long time. And so the idea of not only starting a nonprofit, but being part of that new nonprofit, completely boggled my mind. And if I hadn't accepted that offer, I would probably be in a very different place right now. But thankfully, I did. And I got introduced to something like that.

Heather Vickery 8:56

Absolutely. It's really cool. I mean, I work with adults, professional adults in the corporate environment. And I'm begging them to get involved in nonprofit leadership because there's truly no better way to get leadership skills than on the ground. You know, volunteer type work, I cut my teeth working for the American Cancer Society. And I made it was so I worked so hard, I worked like ridiculous amount of hours for like, \$28,000 a years. It was. I'm a lot older than yourselves. But even though it wasn't very much money, even 25 years ago, it wasn't very much money. But I you know, I created their young professionals board. And so we were meeting and these were, again, young professionals, people in their 20s and early 30s. But we we were meeting in bars, we were hanging out, you're too young for bars, that's okay. Right and making friends and that eventually led to the whole the whole rest of my life. So you're so ahead of the game, my friend, that that you are able to have this experience. Now,

Dhruv Pai 10:01

Can I tell you a little secret when it comes to that?

Heather Vickery 10:04

You can tell me anything you want.

Dhruv Pai 10:06

I don't think I'm ahead of the game. Because what we've seen in this pandemic, what I have seen, even from just the people who I've talked to, is a sort of, you know, renaissance of youth volunteerism of teen activism. And so I'm not an exception, I'm more of the rule, because there are plenty of my peers who are just willing to come on board, willing to make a difference and just, you know, commit to it selflessly, and are willing to take leadership in doing so as well. And so my secrets out there now, no one exposes me, but there are a lot of people like me out there.

Heather Vickery 10:38

I appreciate that. And I will say that, from where I stand, I think generationally, your generation. Well, and I should ask you that what technically is your generation? Like, what are you?

Dhruv Pai 10:55

So we're called Generation Z.

Heather Vickery 10:57

You're Gen Z. Okay. I

Dhruv Pai 10:58

Also known as the Zoomers.

Heather Vickery 11:02

Yeah. Okay. So I, that was my guess Gen Z. But then I didn't know where the cutoff was for Gen Z. It has been my experience that Gen Z is very civic minded, very social justice oriented. And I love that. And that gives me an awful lot of hope. It means that the social justice fight that I've been in, all of my adult life is leading to something that's actually going to change the world. And it's all it's all on you kids. So, you know, Hey, no pressure. I appreciate that. What has doing this work during the pandemic looked like and how is it different? I mean, other than you can't be in the same room than when you were doing it before the pandemic.

Dhruv Pai 11:47

Yeah, so the organization that I co founded during the pandemic is called Teens Helping Seniors and the goal of Teens Helping Seniors is contactless delivery of, you know, groceries, medication, really any necessity to seniors and other vulnerable populations, including veterans, and the immunocompromised during the pandemic. And so starting a nonprofit organization was a first for me. But starting one during a pandemic was definitely interesting. Because, first of all, it's really difficult to get the word out to people, right. And already, you're in this terrible circumstance, schools are closing down, people are in a panic. And so when the news, and the media, and everything in life is just filled up with evil, and wherever you look, there's there's something bad happening. It's hard to just make people see the good in things and to make people see the opportunities for helping others, right. And so certainly, during this time, where it was stressful for me and a lot of my peers, starting a nonprofit organization was really difficult. And doing public service period was really difficult because we all have our own unique challenges that we faced during the pandemic.

Heather Vickery 12:54

Yeah. So how did you run your organization differently? I mean, there's so much most of the folks who listen to this podcast are adults well into their adulthood, although I hope you share it with all your friends, and we get this boom of youth listeners that would make me so joyfilled. But these are things at your young age that they can all take with them into their corporate careers. Like, I actually think you all are much better at pivoting and being creative, and how to make things still function and be fun and pleasurable. Which is important, right, given the constrictions of all of this. So how has, have you been running this organization, given COVID restrictions?

Dhruv Pai 13:39

Yeah, so Teens Helping Seniors is you know, an entirely teen run organization as it sounds. And so, when we started this organization, we thought it was never going to take off, obviously, because we had seen stories in the news about teens in Florida, who are just going to the beach despite stay at home, etc. And, and various other bad examples. So we kind of went in with this mentality, like, Okay, this is not going to work. But let's give it a shot. And let's see what

happens. And I think that's the type of mentality that you should really have when going into these things. You shouldn't expect the worst, you should hope for the best. But you should always be prepared for if it doesn't pan out. And you should always have something else you can pivot to. And so we didn't start this with the goal of becoming something International. We didn't even start this with the goal of getting any media attention whatsoever. We started this as a small local high school after school club, quote, unquote, club because during pandemic times, and so I really started as just a small thing with four or five, six people from our high school, some other high schools, and then it really transformed because we saw a need. And so I think that's how these these things should be right. They should be need driven and need oriented. Because what we saw is that we were helping seniors within our county and then seniors from outside our county just read about our thing in the news, and said, this is a service that could be really useful to me, this is something I could use, because it's not as expensive as any of the other alternatives. And it's safe. And so we got this need first from other parts of the state, other parts of the country, then even Canada and other countries. And so based on this need, we were able to expand, you know, our organization to not only meet the need of the seniors, but also to meet the need of the teens who wanted to help their community during the pandemic, but didn't know how.

Heather Vickery 15:31

I love that so much. There, there is a need on both ends. That's what we were talking about when we first started the interview. Right? As we always nothing is completely selfless, we get something out of it. And and that's not a bad thing. That's a human thing. Okay, but so I really want to know how like, how in the world does it, does a young man like you franchise your nonprofit into different states and even different countries? Like what did you actually do when you you heard there was an interest like, okay, we can think bigger. How does this happen? Like, how did you do it?

Dhruv Pai 16:07

So the first step in kind of the process of how we became, you know, the size that we are today is really attracting attention, right. And that's not that's not only like local attention, but it's also attention from, you know, media and the news. And so that was one of the major hurdles when we started the organization. Because we were a small organization, no one had heard of us. And, frankly, it was just kids, right? And no one think kids could do something like this. So it wasn't until we got our first article published in local media that we were able to expand, because people read about it, and people reached out to us, but when we started expanding at, you know, an increasingly rapid rate, and then we started expanding into other states, the question really posed itself, you know, how are we going to manage this organization? How are we, once again, kids who have a school schedule, have to do homework. How are we going to do something like this with the few volunteers that we had, and the solution was to shift it from, you know, the traditional approach of an organization just being one solid, sort of, you know, conglomerate of, of different people on different activities, to something less centralized to something decentralized. And so instead of having one Teens Helping Seniors, right, in Montgomery County, that's our only Teens Helping Seniors, we, what we did is we gave each city, we gave each state the tools it needed to start its own Teens Helping Seniors and the teens

who lived in Arizona and New York and California, those teens who had reached out to us who are driven to, you know, make a change in their community, they took those tools, and they started their own Teens Helping Seniors there, and they were able to make their own change within their community. And so instead of having, you know, this traditional approach, during the pandemic, where there's only one organization, we have each chapter doing its own separate thing. Because our logic was, each chapter knows its community the best people living in that community know what the people in the community need. And so we figured those are the best people to manage that.

Heather Vickery 18:14

I love it so much. And I just have to say that I really wish everyone in every job anywhere could say, those of you on the ground know how to do this better than the rest of us do. Like if we could just build something really great. And then find really great people that believe in it and trust them to do their jobs. What a difference the world of, I'm so excited that you and your friends and the people who work with you are going to lead our country because we need it. That's for sure. Okay, we just right before we started recording, you were sharing with me that one of my past guests, this is just a total coincidence is a mentor of yours, Amy Yontef-McGrath, can you tell me a little bit about that? I love that coincidence.

Dhruv Pai 19:04

Yeah. So it was, I think, the middle of ninth grade. And I was I I was invited as MoCo Student Volunteer of the Year. And that same year, Miss Yontef- McGrath, won Adult Big Person Volunteer of the Year. And so at that, you know, at the sort of convention or at the, at the sort of meeting, I was able to actually get to know Miss McGrath we exchanged, you know, contact information. And so when I wanted to start my own organization, and you know, when I wanted to get involved in public service at a level that I had never done so before. I knew the first person I should reach out to right because I was I was there when I heard her inspiring story in person. I got to talk to her in person. And I have to say that she's really an amazing person and she's really inspiring for me. I wouldn't have been able to do this, you know, without her advice and without her guidance.

Heather Vickery 19:56

I love that. Mentorship is one of the most important and honestly, undervalued things in our lives and what I, I don't want to make assumptions, but you you saw her speak and you met her and she gave you her phone number, but a lot of people are legitimately afraid to then take action. It takes a certain level of confidence, self trust, or just plain grit, to say, I'm gonna call this lady who I think is really cool. And who has done this amazing stuff, because I want this to succeed. And I know that I need to talk with someone who knows what they've what they're doing to help me do that.

Dhruv Pai 20:41

Yeah, sometimes you kind of kind of meet these people in life, who have an idea where they're going and have an idea of who they want to be. And so you just kind of want to be swept along

in their current, you want to be a part of that. And so that's, that's kind of the sense I got when I first met Miss McGrath.

Heather Vickery 20:59

That is cool. So speaking of that, who do you want to be like, what do you what are your dreams for the future? You still got another year and a half of high school, and what do you see for yourself?

Dhruv Pai 21:13

So I think it's, for me, especially when I was growing up, there was a very traditional career choice in my culture. And so it was,

Heather Vickery 21:23

And what culture is that?

Dhruv Pai 21:25

I'm from India. And so it was either it was doctor or engineer. And so I had a lot of education in, in STEM in science, and even to this day, and then one day, I was, you know, sitting in math class. And I was like, okay, when is this? I was thinking in the back of my head... When is this going to get over so I can go out and hang out with my friends? And I was like, when is this ever gonna be useful? Right? When is the stuff I'm learning ever gonna be useful? And that's a pretty common thought, you know?

Heather Vickery 21:54

Sure it is to have I have two high schoolers. It's a very common thought.

Dhruv Pai 21:59

And then I was like, What if I could use this somehow, to help people for volunteering? Like, what if I could, instead of, you know, sitting in some ivory tower, you know, writing up publications that probably aren't gonna help people, what if I could actually use what I'm learning to make a change in the world? What if I could use science and technology to create solutions to better people's lives? And so that's kind of my that's kind of my goal. Obviously, there's no major in college for it yet. But I guess I would call it an empathy scientist or a scientist for empathy.

Heather Vickery 22:33

Oh, my gosh

Dhruv Pai 22:34

I don't know, I'm just throwing it out there.

Heather Vickery 22:35

I think we have the title for our episode, empathy scientist. That's so that's so cool. But you know what, I think the I think maybe that the degree there is some sort of entrepreneurial

degree, right? Like, because it's the business stuff that you have to be sounds like he got the rest of it locked up. You just got to figure out how to build this business and the technology that you want, but plenty of schools will let you design your own major. If you don't already know that. Let me go ahead and tell you that right now. So you can build it any way you want. And it sounds like you know that you don't, I don't think you need anybody to say, you know, what the world is your oyster, you can you can do anything. You've done it. You know, I did an interview a couple of years ago with a magician, she's a German, hypnotist and magician, which is just funny. Isn't that a funny thing to say. It's just like I had a giggle, everytime i would say it. She's really neat lady. And I just published my first book at the time. And I had mentioned publishing the book, and she said, Oh, Heather, you're you're a magician, too. She said, You took something that was invisible, and you made it visible. You're magic. And that's what I say to you like your ability to see the unseeable thing and then create it is such a gift. And I hear you saying that, that your generation is on this. And they've got it. And I hope you're right. But I'm here to tell you not everybody has that, not everybody has the grit and the visibility to come up with something in their head and then build it and then franchise it and then go, yeah, I'm not gonna do this thing that my family told me I always had to do I'm going to, I'm going to save the world instead. Like, that's special.

Dhruv Pai 24:28

Yeah, well, to be fair, I just want to clarify that it's, I don't think you should think of it as as necessarily a gift or a talent, but it's something that you can work on. And it's something that you can improve, right? Yeah, and just by simply by engaging with other people, and simply by helping them out, you can start to see connections between, you know, what you're learning in school or how your job experience is going or what you're doing at the workplace, and what you can actually do to impact people's lives and how to help people. And after you spend enough time in those environments that connection will just become, you know, common sense to you?

Heather Vickery 25:01

Yeah, I dig it. I mean, there's a lot of science behind empathy and courage being skillsets that you can develop. So your social emotional awareness is like mind blowing to me right now. It's very cool. Did they teach you this in your school? Or does it come from your parent? Like, I do this for a living professionally, and I don't even think my own kids could regurgitate that. So how do you know this?

Dhruv Pai 25:31

Um, I don't think it was anything, you know, outstanding. I just I got to talk to and I got to meet some amazing people. Miss Yontef- McGrath included, obviously. And through those experiences, and through those bonds I forged, I was able to sort of grow. And I know that's a strange thing for a teenager to say. But it's true. It's really, it's really a people that I've met along the journey that have made the journey what it is.

Heather Vickery 26:01

Well, you are quite humble. And and that's admirable, but I will tell you that you also have a really unique vision. And that's okay. It's okay to tell you that and say not everybody has that,

because you will light that fire and other people. If you keep doing what you're doing, and modeling that behavior, you will light people up with that, but somebody has to start my friend, and you're, you're on the path. What do your parents think of this?

Dhruv Pai 26:32

My parents actually were sort of the ones who even gave me the idea to step up and start volunteering to begin with. And so they've been completely supportive of the whole idea. And they enjoy the idea of an empathy scientist in their family. And so they can go to the

Heather Vickery 26:50

Add the word Scientist and then you can check that box, right?

Dhruv Pai 26:53

Yeah exactly. They can go to family gatherings and tell the other parents, oh, my son, he's a family scientist, not family, empathy.

Heather Vickery 27:03

And I said that empathy side is I love that. And I love that for your parents. Um, if, if we have young folks listening, and again, I don't know how big that audience is, unless you share this, or parents, and that I know, we have, what would you recommend is one of the easiest ways for folks to just sort of dip their toes in to being more on the forefront of work like this?

Dhruv Pai 27:35

Hmm. And it's, it's a difficult question to answer because it really varies from person to person. But one underlying current is, I think that everyone should understand that it doesn't have to start out that way. Like, you don't have to start out as someone who loves volunteering, or necessarily even likes it, right. It's something that can be worked on. And it's something that is not it's not a talent or a gift, but it's a skill. And so that's what I would say to to parents, and kids who are watching this is to really think of empathy to think of altruism, and to think of interacting with other people as less of something that can't be changed about you or, or less of something that's given. But something that can be worked on something that can be honed with time. And eventually, if you work at it, and if you truly value it, you know, you will find that these skills, and these abilities just, you know, come hand in hand.

Heather Vickery 28:31

Yeah, I like that. I like it. I like it a lot. So, one of the questions that I really love asking, and I and I so curious to hear your answer is how you like to celebrate. Now, let me just tell you why I asked that question. Because I believe my mentors say, to me, celebration is a lost art. But celebration and gratitude are partners. And when we celebrate and express happiness and joy, it bleeds into gratitude, and it's contagious. And so learning how others celebrate and what they deem worthy of celebration is such a gift that we give our listeners every week. And so I'm very curious to hear your answer on this. How do you celebrate? And what do you celebrate?

Dhruv Pai 29:20

So celebration, isn't really something that comes naturally to me. Especially because, you know, the way I was raised the school I was raised in. It was it was very competitive, right? And so the nature of that was, okay, you got an accomplishment, but the goal of that accomplishment is you should compare yourself to others. You should, you should compare yourselves. Compare your accomplishments to other accomplishments, so you can kind of gauge your self worth and

Heather Vickery 29:49

I hope you've changed that.

Dhruv Pai 29:52

Yeah. It wasn't really honestly, it was something I imposed on myself, right. It was a way I viewed the world. And it wasn't really something that society put on me, but I had to, after, after sort of sort of maturing a bit, I've kind of, I've kind of realized that it's not so much about comparing yourself to others. And so that's when I've been able to find the joy in celebration. And so for how exactly I celebrate, Um, I'd say the easiest way for me and the most common way, especially during pandemic, is just spending time with my loved ones. And by loved ones, I mean, specifically, So I have two cats, their names are Kit Kat and Snickers. I love them more than almost anything in the world. And when I grow up, I'm going to be one of those crazy cat people with a house full of cats. And wherever you walk in their house, you just feel cats rubbing your leg. And you think, what can they do with this many cats? But yeah, I just, I love cats so much. It's my release. It's my celebration. Don't ask me why.

Heather Vickery 30:53

Empathy scientist, I'll teach you a little bit of something while you may you, you're pretty smart kid, you probably already know this. But petting an animal like that is one of a small list of things that stimulates your parasympathetic nervous system. And when you stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system, it decreases stress, anxiety and depression.

Dhruv Pai 31:13

Hmm, interesting.

Heather Vickery 31:14

So maybe it's your, it's your self medication. Let me pet this animal and I'm gonna feel more feel more relaxed, more joyful. I love that. Okay, so you celebrate by loving on your cats. Is that it? That's okay if it is.

Dhruv Pai 31:29

Let me think, Oh, yeah, I also enjoy doing some art. And so I'm not great at art. So most people who who say they're artists are actually good at art, like they can, they can draw things, they can paint things. I'm not actually good at art. But I like to say I'm an artist, because

Heather Vickery 31:46

Art is subjective, my seven year old will tell you there's no way to do art wrong.

Dhruv Pai 31:52

True if you consider abstract art, but at least by my standards, by my standards, my own art is not beautiful. And I'm sure by any artists standards, they wouldn't think that they're art is beautiful. But these paintings back here, were actually painted by my grandfather. And he was he was an artist. He's retired now. But he sort of inspired me to try to try to get into art as sort of a release. And so I tried to do that to celebrate sometimes, truthfully, all that comes out is some stick figures and garbled text. And but I find it's a good way to celebrate for myself.

Heather Vickery 32:29

I love that, it's very meditative. Again, I think it's all very subjective. And even if it's just personal, that's awesome. Does your organization have any systems in place for celebrating hard work from volunteers or starting a new chapter or any of that? How do you instill this wonderful level of emotional intelligence and empathy by leading by example with your community.

Dhruv Pai 32:59

So especially for you know, my nonprofit, that Teens Helping Seniors, the biggest way, or the biggest way we felt that we could celebrate someone's efforts is to recognize them on you know, an organization scale, but also to just, you know, spread the word of one of the awesome work they're doing as far as possible. And so we've you know, we have a, we have a blog page on our on our website, we talk about Volunteer of the Week, almost every single week. And so we've also featured volunteers on our social media. And so a lot of these volunteers have really inspiring stories, they have their own individual stories of maybe working with one or two seniors and just going out of their way to make that seniors life better and and to make their deliveries better. And so we like to celebrate by, you know, having having zoom calls, and just, you know, kind of like, surprise, happy birthday, but with surprise, you're volunteer of the week, you know, something like that. And often it's a little bit cheesy, but that's that's the celebration, right? When it's ,when it's done with a lot of people and they're all sincere about it. It's one of the best experiences in the world.

Heather Vickery 34:06

Absolutely. It is. Do you have a chapter, I live in the Chicagoland area? Do you have a chapter out here?

Dhruv Pai 34:12

Yeah, we do have a chapter in Chicago.

Heather Vickery 34:14

All right.

Dhruv Pai 34:15

Yeah. Furthermore, if for anyone who's listening on the podcast, if you don't, like if you, if you don't have a chapter or you want to get involved in your local chapter, then you can reach out to us just go to TeensHelpingSeniors.org we'll put you in touch and we'll give you all the tools that you need.

Heather Vickery 34:31

Awesome. Is there an age requirement to be involved in your organization?

Dhruv Pai 34:38

So it did start out as teens helping seniors to tell you the truth, but it is no longer teens helping seniors it is now more of preteens, teens, college students, adults and seniors helping seniors which is a bit of a mouthful, so we decided not to change the name.

Heather Vickery 34:56

I know, I love I love the name and I love that it's inclusive enough because there I have an 11 year old that I suspect will be all over this. So I that was one of the reasons I was asking. I have four daughters. And I'd like to say they'd all be all over it. But this one is my civic minded most child. I love it. I love what you're doing. I love your drive. I love, I love the way you communicate. And the way you ask for what you want. And you're building. You're a magician, you are magic. And so are the people you work with. It's beautiful.

Dhruv Pai 35:31

Sorry, where did you say you were from again?

Heather Vickery 35:34

So I'm it this is a weird thing that folks in Chicago, I'm actually just outside of Chicago and Forest Park, Illinois. And we say stupid things like Chicago land, it's like even includes part of Northwest Indiana. I don't really know why is anybody listening know by the hell we call it Chicago land. It's really dumb. But that is what we call it.

Dhruv Pai 35:54

Okay, yeah, sorry, because I miss-took your location. We don't have a chapter in Chicago. And so your daughters would be potentially, you know, great founders of a teens helping seniors chapter or really anyone you know, or even yourself,

Heather Vickery 36:08

Even myself, alright. Well, I love it. I will talk to some of the folks I know and see if we can get something off the ground in this area. I think that would be really great. So other than teens helping seniors, I know you're very civic minded. And you do a lot of other volunteer work. Actually, before I asked this question, how do you have time to run your own nonprofit and to be a junior in high school, and I know what the workload is for a junior in high school, and do other stuff? And also, like be a kid? How do you do at all?

Dhruv Pai 36:38

Hmm. So during the pandemic, this wasn't as much of an issue because school was less of an issue. But especially now, for me, and for a lot of our volunteers, you know, school does take up a significant amount of time. But I think the trick is, and this is, this is a cliché, but it's, it's true, I can't repeat it enough. It's about finding time, right? Because even if we look, within our day, I have school from, let's say, eight to four. Right? And so that leaves me, you know, six hours to do what I'm interested in. To do, whether it's like volunteering, or whether it's talking to my friends or celebrating, anything of the sort. And if you look at it from the mentality that, oh, I've only six hours left, what am I going to do? As opposed to the mentality of, Oh, my God, I have six hours, what can I do? So I think it's that short sort of shift and mentality that makes it all happen.

Heather Vickery 37:34

I love that mindset perspective, that's that people pay a lot of money to learn how to do that as adults. So I'm gonna say again, I think you are ahead of the game a little bit, my friend, I think that is lovely. The rest of us are like, Oh, my God, I've been on friggin zoom from eight to four. And all I want to do is like, nothing. Don't talk to me anymore. So I think it's beautiful. I love it. Alright, so what is your favorite charitable organization to support other than your own?

Dhruv Pai 38:05

Yeah. So like I was, I think I mentioned earlier, so I volunteer with the Red Cross at the hospital every summer. And so it would be great if I don't know people listening to the podcast, can support the Red Cross, because I truly enjoy working for them. I got to meet a lot of new people, I got to meet some of my closest friends. And so it's been one of my greatest, you know, experiences in volunteering so far. And so if you can give however little to the Red Cross, just know that you know, your donations, or whatever you're giving is really going to make a big difference.

Heather Vickery 38:42

Thank you for that. So the Red Cross, and teens helping seniors will be our charity of the week. Well, this week that the episode airs, we're going to give you all lots of love. And I asked my listeners always give what is it is that you can get whether it's time, money, social media, shares, likes, introducing other people to the organization. any of that counts, every bit of it is valuable. So thank you for sharing that with us. Drew, will you give us your three words? Last one last time, please?

Dhruv Pai 39:11

Sure. Curious, altruistic and innovative.

Heather Vickery 39:16

And indeed, you are. Indeed you are. I have loved this conversation. I've loved getting to know you. I'm so inspired by you and what you're bringing to the world. So thank you so much for being here.

Dhruv Pai 39:30

Yeah, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak on this podcast.

Heather Vickery 39:34

Listeners, if you were worried about the state of our future, just let this conversation put your mind at ease. Just show up and do the work. And keep believing because our kids have got it covered. These kids are amazing. You can do anything. You can do anything. If you dream it you can build it. You can create it and invent it doesn't matter what it is it does require vision. It requires community connection and hope. And I hope that you are as tickled and inspired by this conversation as I am. If you would like to be part of a community of adults, I'm sorry, I'm not a high schooler, but of adults that are really into doing this on a grand scale with their life and their business. Come hang out with us. In my Facebook collective Brave on Purpose. We are a group of folks who are 100% committed to leveraging our fears into intentional bravery. Because what we know for sure, is that when we choose bravely on purpose, we choose bigger, we win bigger, and it's contagious. So just visit Facebook, search Brave on Purpose, answer three simple questions. And voila, you're in easy, free, wonderful community. Thank you so much for being here with me and for being part of our little brave community. This is Heather Vickery reminding you today and every single day to go out and choose bravely. Hey, friends, I want to share something really exciting with you. We already know you enjoy listening to podcasts because you're listening to this one. But I'm also betting you enjoy audiobooks. And hey, listen, if you don't already enjoy audiobooks, then it's time to check them out. That's why I'm really excited to share libro.fm with you. They are an incredible new platform for listening to audiobooks. And by choosing libro.fm over other audio book services, you are supporting a local bookstore of your choice and investing in your local community. libro.fm offers over 150,000 audio books via their primary platform, which by the way, they built with love and from scratch because they're a small business also. They even offer bookseller recommendations for great audio book options. You can sign up right now via www.VickeryandC.com/libroFM, that's VickeryandCo.com/librofm. And when you do, you'll get one free audio book of your choice. And the proceeds will go to your favorite local bookstore. Now check what I just said there, you're going to get a free book, and the proceeds are still going to go to your local bookstore, because libro.fm makes sure that their booksellers get paid even when they give a promo to customers. I've listened to over 20 audiobooks this year alone. I especially love listening to memoirs read by the author. And it feels great knowing that all of my purchases support my local bookstore, The Book Table in Oak Park, Illinois libro.fm, the same audio books, the same price, but a completely different story. Check them out right now at VickeryandCo.com/librofm. Have you ever thought about starting a podcast? Maybe you've had this thought and then quickly shut it down? Because who has the time? Or you don't know how or gosh, it just all seems too hard. If you have something to share with the world, we want to encourage you to get your message out. The world needs to hear it. Did you know that 50% of all homes are podcast fans. If you've ever wondered about having your own podcast or how it can increase your business, or get your message across, then please join me and the other experts from the Podcast Power Academy

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Heather Vickery 44:35

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