

The Brave Files Podcast
Jacob Kniep: Unconditional Leadership
Episode 168

Heather Vickery 0:04

Hey out there, this is Heather Vickery and you've tuned in to The Brave Filed Podcast, really happy to have you here with us. If you are a regular listener to this show, then I'm guessing you've already bought into the concept of being everyday brave. Through the beautiful and powerful interviews we've shared on this show. We've discovered so many different ways to choose bravely and to show up as an active participant in our own lives in unique, creative and brave ways. We know that helping others in any capacity is definitely a brave act. But today's guest takes this to a whole new level, by showing up and speaking out in a very big, very public way. For someone like Jacob who lives their brave, right out in the middle of the spotlight, it takes on a whole new meaning. Jacob lives in a very ultra conservative bubble in Illinois. And from their vantage point, which is one of an out and proud LGBTQ plus member who has a loving and supportive family, they started to notice how many LGBTQ plus youth didn't have anyone to love and support them. They didn't have role models, and people willing to put themselves on the line to protect them. So Jacob decided to do it themselves. Jacob is the founder of outspoken leaders, where their mission is to serve, empower and amplify the voices of all LGBTQ youth and young adults and to teach them and model for them how to be outspoken leaders themselves, you may notice that there is a pronoun change from the time of this interview until now, because we have gotten some clarification that Jacob uses, they/them pronouns and also Jacob's changed their last name, I want to point out that we really believe in the value and importance of honoring and respecting someone's name as well as their pronoun. So if you see that some inconsistency there, that's why, but this is a fantastic conversation. I'm so grateful to Jacob for spending some time with me. I'm so impressed with what they're doing with Outspoken Leaders, and I'm really excited to share this episode with you. So let's get started.

Jacob Kniep 2:32

Determined, self-built, and fun.

Heather Vickery 2:36

This is Heather Vickery. And you're listening to The Brave Files, stories from people living courageously. When we choose bravely in 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. Hi, friends, you know, not everyone is designed to put themselves in the spotlight in order to help others. But today's guest Jacob Norman felt the internal call to do just that. Jacob runs the only LGBTQ nonprofit in an ultra conservative bubble in Illinois. And he's in the process of planning the first ever pride festival in the middle of a

pandemic. And only 26 years old Jacob is a beautiful reminder that everyone has the power to make a positive impact and that big, beautiful, amazing things can happen. From the seed of an idea, Jacob, welcome to The Brave Files.

Jacob Kniep 4:01

Hey, Heather, how are you?

Heather Vickery 4:03

I'm so good. I'm so glad to have you here. We were introduced by Team BRAVE a member Mary. So shout out to Mary for the connection.

Jacob Kniep 4:11

Shout out, Mary. We love her.

Heather Vickery 4:12

We love her. Okay, so I am really excited to have you here You and I have chatted and connected before. And I would love for you to give folks just a little bit of your own personal background story. They've already heard you're super cool and you're doing amazing things and we're going to dig in on that. But what what made you there tell us a little bit about yourself.

Jacob Kniep 4:34

That's such a hard question, I feel like. First off, I just want to say this is the first time anyone's actually said my real age in like real life. So if that says anything about myself,

Heather Vickery 4:46

Is that okay?

Jacob Kniep 4:48

I was taken aback when you said 26. I'm like, Oh my god., I am 26.

Heather Vickery 4:51

I appreciate it. It probably feels old to you because you are 26 it does not .I am 46 so it does not sound old to me. And to see folks, quite frankly, young folks like you doing what you're doing fills me with so much joy and hope and possibility that it's, I think it's an important. Do you also own your age? Friend, you earned every minute of it?

Jacob Kniep 5:16

Well, so it's interesting because I used to always go up, I used to tell people I was older than I am, because I'm so young. So I started off kind of, you know, doing my own thing, like, I got very inspired to do like, stuff at a very young age. And, you know, my first job, I was a hairstylist and you tell somebody that you're 17 and you're a hairstylist, you're gonna be working on their hair, and they freak out. You tell someone you're 21 and they're like, okay, yeah, that's fine. I'm like,

Heather Vickery 5:44

I get that.

Jacob Kniep 5:45

Three years difference.

Heather Vickery 5:46

I used to have an employee who felt like she was undermined if we ever mentioned her age, because people wouldn't take her seriously. And I think that that has been true historically, but your generation is, is changing that, in my opinion, because y'all are badassess.

Jacob Kniep 6:02

I, We try ,we try really hard. But you know, for me, like my whole story kind of starts at a very, very young age, I feel like, you know, kind of reflecting back, like, I was kind of an activist and, you know, kind of doing big things ever since freshman year of high school, I can think back to like, the first time that I can actually pinpoint being an activist or like sticking up for somebody who, you know, the voice for the voiceless, if you will.

Heather Vickery 6:26

Yeah, yeah. So tell us about that.

Jacob Kniep 6:29

So, okay, so I, in Arizona, there's kind of a few ways that you can meander through, you know, school, I came from a charter school, private charter school into a public high school. And, you know, I went in with all of these ideas of like, this is what high school should be. This is, you know, this is how I'm going to express myself, this is what I'm going to do, I'm going to do theater, I'm going to do speech and debate, I'm going to do Student Council, all of these things. And the big thing I wanted to do was speech and debate. And I get to school, and I'm in the speech class, like public speaking class. And I'm like, Okay, great. Like, I can't wait to start competing. And they're like, Oh, yeah, no, we don't have a speech program. So I was like, Well, what what do I have to do? So I reached out to the principal. Principal was like, yeah, so you need to get a teacher and then get 10 students to sign up as well. I got the 10 students, but there was no teacher. So you know, how old are you when you start High School, 13? 13 year old Jacob emails, the superintendent of public schools when I was like, I want a speech and debate program, or else. Three weeks, three weeks later, the Speech and Debate coach was hired as the new Junior English teacher.

Heather Vickery 7:40

So you knew fairly early on then that your voice carried weight. People listened to you.

Jacob Kniep 7:47

I don't know if it was so much. You know, I kind of have this philosophy of like the answer's always No, unless, like until you actually ask, like, you're always missing out on that Yes If you

don't ask. So I was like, what's the worst is gonna happen? Literally, If he had said, No, I would have been like, Okay, fine. I'll move on to Toastmasters or something. But, you know, he, he did the thing. I was like, Oh, my gosh, this actually worked.

Heather Vickery 8:12

I love that. You said that I literally coach grown ass adults on understanding that what you just said, it's always a no, unless you ask like, what is the worst thing that could happen is a question that I ask my clients every day, like, really? What's the risk here? And then we usually dive into what what's the best thing that could happen. And in your case, the best thing was they is they hired a whole new teacher to do this for you. Which is incredible, obviously, though, also was something that the school needed and wanted and you just sort of lit that fire, which is I know what you're doing with your your amazing organization, Outspoken Leaders. And I want to talk about that. But before we get there, I want to talk about what happened in your life that you felt like filling this void, particularly in a space and a place that, quite frankly, maybe isn't so safe for you all the time or for the folks you're supporting all the time. Can you tell us a little about the lead up to starting Outspoken Leaders?

Jacob Kniep 9:18

Yeah. So I am blessed that I had, you know, a family that was supportive, that was loving that was you know, are they perfect? Absolutely not, and I will fault them every single chance that I get, but they were never you know, they never disowned me for you know, who I loved. You know, how I wanted to be identified as, any of that, like they, you know, even though it's tough for them, and they messed up a lot. They were always loving and supportive as best they can. And you know, that goes as far back I came out super early, fifth or sixth grade. And it my mom's first reaction was, Oh, I thought your brother was gay. And I'm like, uh, nope, it's me. But then her second reaction was, how do we find you a place that you can be with peers like yourself? Like, how can we find your community. And she found this organization, it's called One in 10. It's in Phoenix, Arizona, big LGBT Center, I was able to go every Wednesday night, and I, you know, got to hang out with people who are just like me, you know, 13 to 20 year olds who just came out, people who, you know, different walks of life, transgender folk, I'd never been experienced, like, I've never been exposed to these, you know, people that are just like me, and my mom, that was her first reaction was, we need to find your community. So you know, like I said, I was completely blessed to have that. And when you have that kind of community, and you have that kind of support, the thing that I found is you want to give back, like, I want other people to experience, you know, this love, the support this, you know, camaraderie that I had growing up, I want them to have this as well, especially if they're not getting it at home, they're not getting it with their family, they're not getting it at school. So, you know, I don't know if it was really that I set out to be the LGBTQ+ resource for all of Wheaton. But it was, I set out to help these kids. And specifically, I had one kid who I was like, This is all for you, dude. Like, I'm doing this for you, because your parents won't. And it just kind of turned into the thing that it is now.

Heather Vickery 11:30

I love that so much. First of all, I love your mom, that's the best we can hope to do. Doesn't matter who our children are, in any capacity, the very best we can hope to do, as a parent is

say, I'm not sure I totally understand. But I'm here. How can I best support you? How can I make sure that people who do understand are in your life? And that then you have absorbed that right that you that she's passed that down to you, and you're giving that to others. It's really sad that there are so many parts of the, not just the country, but of the world where folks don't have, especially youth, don't have that type of support system. As you mentioned, you're in Wheaton, Illinois. And for those of you listening who don't know, Wheaton is is a hotbed of, you know, Christian colleges and things like that. And I'm not I'm not disparaging any of those. But you can understand that from the LGBTQ perspective, these are things we've been taught based on our lived experience we need to be leery of right? Whereas I tend to approach my life from a, assume the best and work with it if it's not great. This is one area where I go, I need more information before I can assume the best. So So building this organization in this community, can you tell me what that process has been like? And how it's been received in the community? What are you experiencing?

Jacob Kniep 13:04

Yeah, definitely. So I was, you know, owning my own Salon Suite, I was doing my own thing. And I literally remember the day, so every couple of months, I would do this thing where I did trims for charity, haircuts only 20 bucks, only cash, going straight to a charity within our community, I want to give back to the community that's given back to me, this whole like, should feel like I was very much this, like, lead with your heart and the money will follow. And that's still very much what I am today. But you know, I remember I left the Salon Suite started to work for somebody else. And I reached out to my friend who owns a different nonprofit in Wheaton, I was like, I want to start a nonprofit, and I don't know what I want to do, but I want to do this. And she's like, Okay, great. Do it. Like, let's figure it out. So then, you know, couple weeks later, I'm like, it's gonna be a gay nonprofit, because gays need our help. And then a couple weeks later, I had this kid sit in my chair come out to me as non binary, you know, no problem. They/them. I'm all about that. They told me about their recreational activities. And the first thought was condoms, dental dams. You know, all of the stuff that you. Don't get an STD, don't get an STD, don't get an STD. And then their first thought was, please don't tell my mom, I don't want to be kicked out of the house. And I was like, Okay, now it's definitely going to be you know, a gay nonprofit like this, these are the people that I need to support. So I had a couple of my friends who I, you know, similarly minded, but I'm like, I need not Yes men. I need a whole bunch of people who are gonna, you know, rip this to shreds. And I sat them down, I was like, here's what I want to do. This is what I'm basing it off of. Very much basing it off of, you know, what One in 10 in Arizona was for me growing up. I want to be a support group. I want to meet, you know, once a week, I want this, this, this and this. And they're like, it'll never happen in Wheaton. And I said, Nope, it's gonna happen. So this was October. I was like, it's gonna happen by January. Our first meeting is going to be January. So, you know, more of this, like back and forth of like, no, this won't work because of you're not, you know, insured, you're not this, you're not, that you're not a teacher, you're not working out of your own space. And it was very much like fielding those, you know, objections, made the organization that much stronger. We did have our first meeting in January, like it happened.

Heather Vickery 15:22

Yeah, I so love all of that. And I really appreciate for everybody listening. Again, this, you don't even have to need an experience like this, or a program like this, to recognize what Jacob said, just so powerful that all of your obstacles, should you choose to view them as opportunities will make you stronger, and will make you better. And it doesn't also mean they don't suck. I'm not trying to say that, like hard things are hard. But overcoming hard things means you're better. You build a stronger foundation. And, and I love, I just love it. I love it.

Jacob Kniep 15:59

Absolutely. Yeah.

Heather Vickery 16:01

Okay, so you had your first meeting in January, the group is growing. Do you get much opposition from the community?

Jacob Kniep 16:09

I think we always I always love talking about that very first meeting. . So, you know, like I said, the goal was to have the first meeting. And that was the goal. And it happened, right. So the first meeting consisted of me, one of the, you know, people who was helping me start the thing. So her name is, you know, Gretchen, we used to work together as somebody who wanted to kind of give back as well. And then, you know, we did a lot of Facebook marketing, and the only person who showed up was this, like, old mom. And she didn't have a kid who was gay. But her neighbor's brother's cousin, had a kid that was gay, and she just wanted to, you know, find a resource to support. And I was like, well, not what I expected. But, you know, it's a step in the right direction. But you know, I think about that first meeting, and I think about, you know, the thoughts that I had after of like, well, maybe all of those opportunities and those objections were right, maybe this isn't going to be a good thing. And, you know, I had, for whatever reason, I kept pushing, and I was like, No, we're gonna do it again next week. It'll be better next week. And I'm glad I did. Because the next week, we actually have like, seven kids show up.

Heather Vickery 17:16

Wow. I love that. So you grow. So do you meet weekly.?

Jacob Kniep 17:21

So we did meet weekly, back then. And we were meeting at the park district. So you know, again, we wanted to make it a space that wasn't a church. Church was very visceral, to me, I couldn't, it took a lot for me to go back into a church, you know, kind of around that same time to mingle with other, you know, business owners and other nonprofits. It took me a long time to walk into a church, you know, as myself, so I didn't want to put that pressure on anybody else. So you know, the park district was a great opportunity. We met weekly, and then COVID hit. So.

Heather Vickery 17:56

yep. So then what, like, how do you continue because when we first met was middle of COVID, like this shit was going down. And it didn't seem to be stopping you, you seem to be full steam ahead.

Jacob Kniep 18:08

So it's interesting, because there was this, like, need that I found where we were still providing our services online, it gave me a chance to like, pause, rewrite the curriculum, it gave me a chance to actually write a curriculum that I was proud of, and, you know, excited about. And then, you know, we started offering stuff online, still once a week, but then I was like, maybe we're gonna, you know, mingle with like this discord thing. And we gave, you know, some of these kids that were coming to our sessions, a chance to have a community 24/7. And then I was like, there's got to be something more like something's missing. And last May, kind of, there was this tension from the George Floyd murder. There was this tension from COVID. And I wanted to get out. So you know, I kind of created more of like a community of LGBT affirming businesses, LGBT people, and I really created this sense of community around being, you know, gay in this ultra conservative suburb of Chicago.

Heather Vickery 19:09

Yeah. That's amazing. And it's beautiful. And can you share some success story? Like, what are some experiences you've had since you started the organization that make you go, I just have to keep doing this.

Jacob Kniep 19:22

So one of the biggest success stories I can think about is one of my old clients and one of our first kiddos, his name is Eric, he transitioned a few years ago. And I met him because, you know, I was a gay hairstylist, kind of doing this weird promotion on Facebook, met his mom. And I remember his mom, you know, dead named, and misgendered, often, and I just, I just saw over the, you know, time that I had been working with both of them. And then the time that he actually, you know, came to our meetings like I saw him grow. I saw him blossom. I saw him become himself. But I also saw mom become like this open except like I've not. It's been probably two years since she's dead named, two years since she's misgendered. Like the whole, like, boom, you've got a son like that's it, like no if, ands or buts about it, and, and I'm just so proud of mom. But you know, Eric also won our Outspoken Leader Award last year for just being you know, I saw him grow, he was able to start his own little organization within his school district, the whole thing and he, you know, got a scholarship to a college, like, this kid who couple years before, may not have shown much potential, may have just been like a troublemaker, may have just been misplaced, or displaced even, you know, kind of grew into his own, you know, is like, doing the thing. I'm like, Yes, yes.

Heather Vickery 20:52

Oh, my gosh, I love that. And one of the things that I recall from our previous conversation that I know is a core component of, of your organization, is to have a community to promote self acceptance and intentional compassion. And I feel like this story you just told taps into that

intentional compassion. But I'd love to have you expand on that a little. Because, well, because I want to hear it. But mostly, because just what you said, like, you know, with just a little bit, you can completely shift the direction a person may go, where they where they start to feel like they carry value and worth and importance. So I'd love to hear your your expansion on intentional compassion.

Jacob Kniep 21:39

Yeah. So I think that plays definitely into what you were saying. But it also plays into the part of being the gay or LGBTQ+ nonprofit in Wheaton. The saying that we throw around is, you know, we love those. We love everybody, regardless of who they love or accept. So like, when it comes to like churches, when it comes to, you know, your conservative parents, like, the reason that they are, you know, if you want to call it hate, if you want to call it fear, whatever you want to call it, the reason that they are that way, in my mind, at least is because they don't know. Like, it's, it's not anger, it's fear of the unknown. And when you can start educating when you can start, you know, showing them hey, you know, this is what unconditional love looks like, and I'm going to show you love, even though you're actively tearing me down, like, I think it adds a human value to you know, the LGBTQ+ community.

Heather Vickery 22:38

It does. But that's a hard thing to do.

Jacob Kniep 22:42

You are right. It is.

Heather Vickery 22:44

it's a valuable thing to do. But is it everybody's thing to do?

Jacob Kniep 22:47

No.

Heather Vickery 22:48

See, that's, okay. So, I am a girl, I've always been a girl. I was born a girl, I'm still a girl. And I grew up in a very different timeframe than where everybody is now where my own children are now. I grew up believing that the responsibility was mine to not dress too sexy, because if people cat-called me, that was my fault, like that kind of thing. And I fight back on that. But I see kids today who are like, Why do I have to? Why do I have to be the one to fight this battle? Like, can I just be me? So some people have to fight. And some people like you are born to do that. But yeah, does it have to be everybody's job?

Jacob Kniep 23:28

Absolutely. Great question. And no. So I get into this with my mom often. So I'm, as you can probably guess, I'm very social activisty on the internet. And then I'm very much to the point of like, I will defend the many over the one or two family members that I'm going to, you know, offend. I'd much rather defend and keep somebody alive than offend, you know. So, you know,

me and my mom always kind of get into this argument of like, I can think of a time a couple months ago, when my grandma posted something that I didn't agree with, and I was like, No, like, I'm gonna go hard. And my mom was like, Why does it have to be you? And I said, Look at her friends list. Nobody else is doing it. Like, is it everybody's job? Absolutely not. But I know that I can. And I will always fight for those people who don't have the voice. And a lot of that is educating. But a lot of that is you know, actually like fighting and when it comes to intentional compassion in our organization. For me, specifically, when I look at like, you know, this when I look at somebody posting, kind of degrading someone's value or someone's like, lived experience, I'm not being intentionally compassionate to the people who, you know, are being devalued if I don't speak up and I don't say something. So it kind of it goes both ways. Like who am I being intentionally compassionate to and why? So there was this big thing last year with, you know, different partnerships and different, you know, organizations, and should I say something? Should I not? Should I get involved with, you know, speaking out against city council? Should I get involved against, you know, speaking out against the mayor. And, you know, the decision that I came to is everything that I'm doing, you know, sure, I'm going to be intentionally compassionate to the other side, sometimes, but I'm always 100% going to be intentionally compassionate to the kids and the community that I serve. And if that means getting myself into a sticky situation where you know, I'm extremely uncomfortable, I've lost some friends, I've lost, you know, a couple of donors, that's fine, because at the end of the day, you know, the people of color in Wheaton now feel a little bit safer, hopefully. The LGBTQ+ community now feels a little bit safer. And, you know, I may not be liked by everybody. But that's not the goal. The goal is to help to serve, to empower, to amplify these voices.

Heather Vickery 25:56

I love that. And you bring up a really valid point, of course, there's, there's always multiple sides to any conversation, and certainly any defense, intentional compassion for your kids, for your kids in your organization, clearly means that you're going to give pushback in other ways to other people, but you don't have to do that. And I hear you saying that you don't do that in a way that is hateful, or hurtful or degrading. And that's really my favorite takeaway. And lesson is, we can speak up and we can speak out and speak our truths and support other people with out being harmful and hateful back.

Jacob Kniep 26:39

Correct. And, you know, a lot of it comes to like, we have to be intentionally compassionate to ourselves first.

Heather Vickery 26:45

Yes. Oh, my goodness, yes.

Jacob Kniep 26:46

And, you know, there's this like, weird dynamic in Wheaton that I've not experienced anywhere else, where like, these people will go to church, like I'm talking about the LGBTQ+ community will still go to church, because it's, it's what they do, and to be intentionally compassionate to yourself, like, how do we bridge the gap between you know, maybe we're going to find you a

different church, but we're going to find you a way to keep going to church so you still get that, you know, that thing that you're looking for out of that organization. So it's all about, you know, figuring out who we're being intentionally compassionate to, and how that resonates in our life.

Heather Vickery 27:22

I love that. It's really so thoughtful and tailored and inclusive, it's beautiful. Tell me what unconditional leadership means to you.

Jacob Kniep 27:32

Okay, so. Kind of, all very much aligned with each other. But you know, unconditional leadership means, you know, sometimes leaders are quiet, sometimes leaders are sitting back, sometimes leaders are followers. And, you know, being a leader can mean different things to different people. When I, when I first named Outspoken Leaders, it was, I don't know, where it came from it like came in a dream like this is it, we're going to create future leaders. And you know, kind of as it grew, I was like, Well, you know, maybe future leaders aren't all a bunch of politicians, maybe they're not all a bunch of lawyers. But you know, leadership means different things to different people. And, you know, maybe to, you know, Phillip, leadership means, you know, being able to go into work every day and embracing who he is. Maybe leadership means I'm going to inspire somebody to actually run for city council, maybe leadership means, you know, getting the courage to, you know, move away from home. So, unconditional leadership means, you know, looking at leadership in different ways, so that we can be the leaders that we need to be that we want to be and that we deserve to be.

Heather Vickery 28:45

I love that. I love it so much, I'm gonna go back and re listen to that and like, type it up. And because it's really important, and I do believe that every one of us has a leader within us, even if you are quiet or you're shy, there are different ways to lead. There are types of leaders needed in every situation. And recognizing that and honoring it is really beautiful. What is on the horizon for Outspoken Leaders, what is what are you up to?

Jacob Kniep 29:16

So a couple things will be happening. We've got pride right around the corner, we're doing a hybrid pride all month of June. But after that, we are actually kind of shifting roles. So Outspoken Leaders, I'm acknowledging I'm accepting and I'm kind of, you know, if you love something, let it go, quote, unquote, there's this thing called founder syndrome in nonprofits where, you know, a founder can be very outspoken, can be very idealistic can be very, like it becomes the Jacob show real quick. And, and we're, we're there. And I'm like, like, I've set up the governance to not be that but with me still being the face of Outspoken Leaders. It's very hard to not be the Jacob show. So I'm going to be after Pride, I'm going to be taking a step back and moving into like the board president role as opposed to being the executive director, and, you know, kind of training and teaching and creating new leaders for Outspoken Leaders to, you know, be a new executive director, somebody who can be the new voice for the voiceless in Wheaton. And, of course, you know, it gives me more of a chance to mess around in ways that I couldn't being a nonprofit executive director.

Heather Vickery 30:32

I love that. And I really, really admire within you, this notion that sometimes to be the very best leader, it means we are not the ones that lead, is letting other people step up and, and and to grow and to see what can flourish from that. So what will your role be at that point?

Jacob Kniep 30:53

So I will be less day to day and more governance and you know, big picture of how we can move the nonprofit forward, how we can move the LGBTQ+ community forward, kind of working more behind the scenes of like, creating more curriculum, doing more policy work, and you know, really making sure that all of the little things that you know, you don't see, that you don't experience will get done. So that that will be my role is kind of more of a governance and big picture and looking for somebody who's going to be day to day operations, because the goal with Pride is actually to, you know, raise enough money to get a community center, and I want somebody who also kind of has that need to give back to the community, but you know, still needs to be molded a little bit like, I'd love to kind of help create, you know, a life for somebody, I'd like to be able to create this, like, I want to pay somebody a living wage to give back to the community. Like that's the whole goal is to create leaders create a community create a place where people can, you know, kind of grow into their own and give back. Because that's what I had. And that's how Outspoken Leaders started. And, you know, if it means that, you know, somewhere down the line, one of my students, you know, leaves the state and starts their own nonprofit helping somebody else I've won. And you know, yeah, even if it's just one person, I it's a win for me. 100%.

Heather Vickery 32:15

I love that so much. Does this work feel brave to you?

Jacob Kniep 32:19

It does, it feels brave, vulnerable, terrifying, but it feels all of the things. For sure.

Heather Vickery 32:28

Absolutely. I'm glad that it feels brave to you. Because I really believe there's a lot of power in knowing that our actions are intentionally brave, it bolsters us. And it gives us some motivation and some courage to go do that next thing versus, versus downplaying our roles in ourselves and the work that we're doing. Jacob, how do you celebrate? Do you take the time to celebrate? And not just you. I do want to hear about you personally. But also, as an organization, how do you celebrate?

Jacob Kniep 32:59

Oooh, one question I've not thought about. So. I don't know if you could tell, but I'm not really big on like, time off. What's that? You know, vacations, what are those?

Heather Vickery 33:12

Yes, but celebration can be anything.

Jacob Kniep 33:15

You are right. So I would say you know, as an organization, you know, the celebrations that I get to have would be, you know, actually getting to attend the Pride that I'm planning, actually getting to go to Beers with Queers every other Thursday, and, you know, unwinding and hanging out with my community that I've built and hanging out with the people. And seeing, you know, the celebrations really come from, you know, seeing people who wouldn't have been able to, you know, hold hands wouldn't have been able to kiss wouldn't have been able to go out to dinner, actually out to dinner. And it like, fills my heart so much. And I think that that's my own personal celebration is, you know, being with the community that I've built, because I know that I'm also a part of it.

Heather Vickery 33:56

Yeah. I love that. That's beautiful. Your celebration is just so important. And there's so many ways from just sharing a win or, or shouting from the rooftops, or a dance party or whatever. But it's really beautiful to think of you out and enjoying your best life with people who you're supporting to do the same thing.

Jacob Kniep 34:16

Absolutely.

Heather Vickery 34:17

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. If people wanted to learn more about you, the organization if they want to support you sponsor or get involved, what's the best way for them to connect with you?

Jacob Kniep 34:28

So they can reach out to our website. It's Outspoken.gay, literally Outspoken.gay

Heather Vickery 34:34

Awesome.

Jacob Kniep 34:34

Yep we got in real early with that domain. But you know, we also have an app for Pride, kind of the whole premise of Pride is that we're in the middle of pandemic. So we're trying to keep everybody you know, as safe as possible. So hybrid means you can come and watch in person or you can stay at home and watch from the comfort of your own home. The app is on the App Store and on the Google Play Store. It's called Welcome Home.

Heather Vickery 35:01

I love that. I'm gonna check it out what that's amazing. You built an app in the middle of all this?

Jacob Kniep 35:07

I paid somebody really good money to build the app.

Heather Vickery 35:12

Alright, fair enough. Fair enough. I love that. Well as we I could just talk to you forever. And I would love to be involved in what you're doing. And The Brave Files would love to be involved. So I hope that as opportunities present themselves, you'll think of me and of us and reach out so that we can stay connected and continue to support. But other than your own amazing organization, what is your favorite charitable organization to support?

Jacob Kniep 35:36

So I'm kind of torn between two. Of course, the first one is going to be One in 10. In Phoenix, Arizona, when I first started Outspoken Leaders, they were there. They were there when I was growing up, and you know, they continue to serve and support, you know, all of Arizona. So I think that if anybody is out there in Arizona, definitely check them out. But I'm also a really big fan of the as cheesy as it sounds, the Human Rights Campaign. Because I mean, it's, it's another gay nonprofit, you know what I mean? Like,

Heather Vickery 36:10

So?

Jacob Kniep 36:10

You're right, you're right. But you know, the Human Rights Campaign is doing great work. With all these anti trans bills coming out, you know, all these different states, they're keeping on top of it, they're keeping me informed of like, things that I didn't know. And they're fighting. And, you know, I can respect and honor anybody who's going to fight for, you know, the underprivileged and give a voice to the voiceless. So, Human Rights Campaign all the way.

Heather Vickery 36:35

Yeah, that's awesome. So all three of these organizations will be featured as charities of the week for us once this episode is out. And folks, you know, you know, my call, you know, my request listeners every week is, give him a little love, do what you can share what you can support in any way that you can. We it's on us, It's on us to make this the world that we want to live in for ourselves and for the next generation. So let's do that together. Jacob, would you share your three words with us one last time?

Jacob Kniep 37:06

Yes, definitely. So my three words are determined, self-built, and fun.

Heather Vickery 37:13

I love those words. And I love we talked about self-built, I love hyphenated words, we make up hyphenated words on this show all the time. You're like, I don't know how to make this one word. And I'm like, we will just do it. That's how we do it. There are no rules.

Jacob Kniep 37:26

That's right.

Heather Vickery 37:26

We can do whatever the fuck we want. And certainly you are self built, but also self built on a foundation of love and support, which is what you're giving to everyone else. So it's magical. Thank you so much for being here with us and sharing your story and your heart. And just the inspiration, the light that you give out to the world. I appreciate it.

Jacob Kniep 37:49

I appreciate you, Heather. This was great. I appreciate you having me on and sharing my story. And of course, you know, doing everything that you're doing, I think that you're also making a difference in the world. And if you don't hear it often enough, just know that you're appreciated as well.

Heather Vickery 38:03

That's nice. Thank you. I have all the I've all the feels now I feel very soft and fuzzy inside. I appreciate that very much. Listeners I'm so glad you were here with me for this. I know that Jacob is inspiring you all. Remember that just just one little idea one little seed you have the power to bring it forward or to connect with other people and build and grow and you can be that determined and do something just as wonderful. I'd love to hear your thoughts, your feedback on this conversation or anything related to how you're choosing bravely or what you've liked to see in the show. You can give me a call at 312-646-0205 I respond to every call myself. You can email me Heather@Vickeryandco.com. I would love to connect with you. If you haven't joined our Brave on Purpose collective. Go ahead and do that right now. Visit Facebook and search Brave on Purpose. And answer three simple questions and come on in because we are a community of people. Hopefully you'll see Jacob there. We are a community of people who are choosing to leverage our fear into intentional bravery in every possible way, minute by minute day by day. And if you like the show, don't forget to subscribe rate and review and be sure to share it with a friend. I'm so glad to be on this journey with you. This is Heather Vickery reminding you today and every single day to go out and choose bravely.

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