

Deep Dive- Donté

Dr. John Oliver: [00:00:00] Welcome to Deep Dives with Dr. John at The Kalamazoo Promise. Deep Dives with Dr. John provides opportunity for community members to come and share their story, to share their pathway, to share their journey to inspire, to inform, and to connect members of the Kalamazoo community. Some of these individuals will be Scholars,

some of them will be Alumni, and some of them will be community members who are serving as partners. Welcome to Deep Dives with Dr. John.

Welcome to another edition of deep dives with Dr. John at the Kalamazoo promise. Today, we have the opportunity of speaking with Donté Hudson. He is not only a colleague, I've moved [00:01:00] him up to friend status. I don't do that often. It's just a few folks, you know, but good people doing good work for the people that matter.

And it's like, man, that, that makes it a lot easier. So Donté, welcome to deep dive to Dr. John.

Donté Hudson: Thank you for having me.

Dr. John Oliver: Nice. So tell me a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Donté Hudson: Um, Donté Hudson, man,

Dr. John Oliver: the man, the myth, the legend,

Donté Hudson: right, right. No, I I'm born and raised here in Kalamazoo. Um, I like to think I was a popular guy, you know, in the community and school and everything.

Um, utilize the Kalamazoo promise. So I kinda know the ins and outs of it. Um, both as a student and as an employee, um, Yeah, I just want to be a community leader, you know, and, and the promise has given me the opportunity to do that. Uh, I'm the alumni coordinator here. Um, so just trying to bridge that gap with, um, those [00:02:00] who have used the promise with those that are currently using the promise, um, trying to retain that talent here in Kalamazoo.

And I don't know, I've always had a love for just talking to people and hearing their story. So this has given me the opportunity to do just that.

Dr. John Oliver: So what's your story? Tell me the schools that you went to in KPS. Um, and then tell me how much of the promise that you utilized.

Donté Hudson: I bounced around a little bit in elementary.

Um, so it was like Millwood, north Glade, uh, MLK. Um, and I went to hillside middle school, um, Kalamazoo central grad of 2008 and played basketball. Um, and then from there I went to Michigan state. I got to use a hundred percent of the promise. Um, so that alone man, people don't understand how great the promise is.

[00:03:00] College was always, you know, a thing. Like my older sister went to Michigan state, go green, go white. You never forget it. But, uh, yeah, so I used to visit campus a lot, um, when she was there. So it was like a no brainer. Michigan state was the only school I applied to. You know, I

Dr. John Oliver: That's confidence. That's swag right there.

You I'm applying to the school.

Donté Hudson: Like they would be lucky to have me. No, I like I've applied for like, Michigan. I got like halfway through the application. I was like, this just doesn't feel right. Michigan state, but, um, yeah, I used hundred percent of the promise there. Um, And I don't know, like just my, my peers when I was there, like talking to them about what the Kalamazoo promise was, they're stressed out about, you know, their tuition getting paid for and everything.

And I'm like, oh, I'm good. You know what I mean? Like, you don't want to brag about it, but it's, it's, something the brag about, [00:04:00] you know, so, but no, that was, uh, that was cool. That was a blessing. And. I'm just glad I have the opportunity to just give back to, you know, the promise for everything that they did for me.

Dr. John Oliver: Nice. So Kalamazoo central, you were a basketball player. What was your position? Tell me some of your stats. Don't be modest.

Donté Hudson: Oh man. So I, uh, I was a point guard slash shooting guard. I always had a nice jumper. But, um.

Dr. John Oliver: Is it still there?

Donté Hudson: It's still there. It's like riding a bike, you know, but I was so little in high school, so I didn't get a lot of playing time.

It was like when I did get in the game. All right, let me do something to impact the game just so I could stay in a little bit longer. So, you know, I was shoot, I, like I said, I always had a good shot. So I was quick to score when I got in. And when you get to the defensive end and I'm like, oh, this guy is like four foot eleven, 120 pounds, man.

That's what it felt like all my friends are 6'5", 6'6", but, um, [00:05:00] yeah, so just saying same as how I do now, at work, you know, just try to find a way to impact, uh, what I'm doing impact the, the goal of the team, you know, right away. Um, you know, just to leave my mark on the court or in the office.

Dr. John Oliver: Right.

Donté Hudson: But.

Yeah, but then after high school and I got to college, I grew like four inches put on like 10 pounds. I'm like, man,

I needed this two years ago.

Yeah. So, but no, yeah, basketball was, I don't know my greatest teacher in life. I feel like, um, Because it, you know, it just taught me how to be a team player in any environment, uh, taught me to have confidence in whatever I'm doing.

So like, it, it, it was just my greatest teacher.

Dr. John Oliver: So you took that into not only the classroom, you took that into the workplace environment. And now you're utilizing here at the Kalamazoo promise as far as a team approach, but you're also using it back at [00:06:00] Kalamazoo central.

Donté Hudson: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I coached the freshman team at Kalamazoo central.

So just trying to instill in them the same values basketball taught me as, you know, a freshman through senior. Um, yeah, just trying to instill that back into

those boys, those young men, um, so that it can have the same impact and same influence as it did with me

Dr. John Oliver: and congratulations to Kalamazoo central for going deep into the playoffs this year.

So that was awesome.

Donté Hudson: Made it to the quarters we lost by a buzzer. Practically a buzzer beater shot we were up that whole game until the last two seconds.

Dr. John Oliver: I didn't mean to trigger you, man, I just figured

Donté Hudson: You see me sweating over here, man

Dr. John Oliver: elevate the celebration that Kalamazoo central made it that far.

Donté Hudson: It was fun. It was a fun ride.

Nice,

Dr. John Oliver: so as alumni connecting, what's the title again? Tell me

Donté Hudson: Alumni coordinator. Um, yeah, just trying to connect with, you know, some of my old [00:07:00] peers and, you know, just people that have utilized the promise and have, you know, took that next step into their careers, into adulthood, you know, whatever their story, um, is, you know, your path, your promise you know, that's our motto.

So my, I felt like my job is to figure out those stories, figure out what the past everyone took, um, with the promise. So. Yeah.

Dr. John Oliver: So what are some of the things that you do to make that connection, to learn that story, to help them unpack their connection with the promise what they're doing now and how they've utilized promise, what do you do?

How do you, how do you do that?

Donté Hudson: So one project that, um, I try to tackle is promise stories, you know? So like you've got a few different, uh, outlets for that. So like we do blogs, um, podcasts, um, Just interviews and write ups, you know, just talking to, uh, alumni to hear their story, you know, what the promise [00:08:00] did for them, or, you know, sometimes, uh, we get students that didn't use the promise or couldn't use the promise or, um, you know, just different, different life, uh, experiences, um, with each student and.

Just getting their story out there. You know, I've had, I've talked to students that, you know, uh, was suspended, you know, from using the promise, just because, you know, life threw a bunch of curve balls at them all at the same time. And whether they bounce back from that or they didn't, you know, how can we aluminate, you know, the different things that have happened to them.

Cause you never know, you might have a student that same college right now going through the same thing. So, um, Just to hear that, you know, you're not the only one is, has always been, you know, for me anyway, um, eye opening and enlightening, you know, just, okay, I'm not the only one going through this. [00:09:00]

Dr. John Oliver: So when you find alumni that are available for conversations and you get a large group of them, how do you bring them together?

What are some of the things that make that, uh, A good connecting point. Um, re-engagement, uh, aligning them with the resources that the promise has within the community. What, what do you do? What, what are some of those things?

Donté Hudson: Uh, I mean, we've got a lot of different things that we have been doing, so, um, we have a LinkedIn page promise to promise.

Um, that's a good way for, you know, Kalamazoo promise alum that are like professionals, uh, in their own, right. Uh, for them to come together, you know, um, share ideas, share stories, um, I'm, currently I'm using it to figure out, uh, how can those professionals reach down to like pull somebody up? That's, you know, just graduating, [00:10:00] trying to figure out that next step, you know, that transitional period, uh, here's some job opportunities here.

Some internship opportunity. Um, I'm also putting together an alumni mixer, uh, for the summer. Um, that's in the works right now, but yeah, that's, I feel like that's just going to be another way for people to network, but also, you know, tell their story to somebody face to face instead of them, you know, somebody having to read about it or see it on a podcast or whatever.

Um, just having conversations with each other, you know, we're all coming from the same background. Um, so yeah, let's talk about it.

Dr. John Oliver: So as an alumni, what would be a nugget that you would share with those who are coming up following the path that you've blazed on? Doesn't have to be advice that's a little bit too much pressure, but if you give a nugget to mind something important.

Donté Hudson: Yeah. Um, the most [00:11:00] impactful thing that I heard like while I was at State and, um, after that it's a marathon, not a sprint, you know? So any, any experience that you have, you know, embrace it, you know, good or bad because long-term is going to be beneficial that you went through whatever you're going through, you know, um, it's just gonna make you stronger, you know, with my, uh, Tenure at sprint or sprint state?

My tenure at state. Um, I was there for a little while. I had a lot of gaps in my, um, education, um, and I would get down on myself a lot because it took me so long to, um, to finish. Like I'm just getting done with my final class now. Um, But yeah, it, those life experiences, you know, helped me become who I am today.

I know that sounds [00:12:00] cliché. You know, you hear that a lot. Um, but it's true, you know, like it, uh, it molded me into who I am today, you know, that perseverance and consistency. And never giving up, like it is huge.

Dr. John Oliver: So that marathon not a sprint. So that 10 year opportunity, 145 credit opportunity. That's the marathon part.

And so graduating straight out of high school, 1819 is 17, 17 19 range, depending on when you were born, right? Knowing that you have 10 years to complete this marathon and you don't have to rush fast. But you just be consistent. Yeah. You know, I'm jumping over those obstacles, busting through some of those obstacles, you know, whatever it is.

It's like steeple, chase. I would even change it from marathon to a steeplechase. So you jumping over obstacles, you running through puddles, you're doing all type of things, right. Just to make it through that. The end result is the goal of [00:13:00] graduation credentialing. So again, congratulations to you and that marathon and seeing the end.

The finish line right there in front of you. So push forward brother before, uh, so the mixer, and while you were describing the mixer, you mentioned sprint,

and I know that's not just, I met marathon, but I said sprint, but your mind was also because I know part of your story. I want you to tell the rest of it.

Where does sprint come in?

Donté Hudson: So I worked for sprint for five years before coming to the Kalamazoo promise. Um, I feel like that job in that role, that was another thing that kinda molded me, you know, that was, um, an opportunity to. I understand that I do like talking to people, you know, in sales. I mean, that's like 90% of the job.

You gotta be able to talk to people, you know, and build [00:14:00] that rapport with people, um, to actually make a sale. That was probably the part of the job that I liked most just talking to people. Um, so I'm like, how can I, you know, um, how can I make that, you know, more, a better job for me. And that's when Von Washington approached me with this opportunity, uh, as alumni coordinator, I'm like, oh, so I just get to talk to people all day, sign me up.

Right. You know, so I do credit sprint a lot with, um, you know, helping build my professional portfolio of skills and, and, and things and, and characteristics that I like that I have. Um, because I was there for so long, I'm going to pick something. And my love for just hearing people's stories and talking to them and just having conversations, um, I credit sprint a lot for that.

So, [00:15:00] yeah. Okay,

Dr. John Oliver: cool. I knew that that was part of it. Yeah. So I want to make sure I circle back and give you a chance to unpack that sprint marathon piece. I had a feel for what it was about. Um, so there's some up and coming events. Um, in the works, uh, that are important for not only young people, young professionals and some seasoned professionals, you know, we find out that what you're going to tell me about next is important for all folks.

Yeah. So I teed it up. So go ahead and knock it out of the park. So what what's coming up.

Donté Hudson: So this weekend actually is our first session for money talks with the Kalamazoo promise. Um, a little background on that when I was in school, um, because my tuition was paid for, you know, any financial aid money that I could receive.

Um, a lot of it just went to my pocket and in the form of a refund check. So if [00:16:00] you give a 18, 19 year old, a lump sum, like \$6,000, And just alright be responsible. I mean, would you be responsible with that?

Dr. John Oliver: I choose not to answer that question. Yeah, of course currently I would, but that time, no, I would not have been.

Donté Hudson: So that was one of my pitfalls early on was just not being responsible with money. No fault of my own. I just didn't know. You know, how to handle money at that time. I've never. Had a conversation with anybody, not even my parents about how to be responsible with money. They taught me about like saving it, you know, but I'm 18.

Like you, okay.

Dr. John Oliver: I'm saving it to buy something.

Donté Hudson: Exactly. You know? Um, so just, uh, as a way to keep this younger generation from not, you know, repeating the same mistakes as their predecessor. Um, I put together the money talks with the Kalamazoo promise where we just talk about financial [00:17:00] literacy, um, which is something that's not talked about enough with, you know, the younger generation, but not only that in the black and brown community, you know, that's something we don't, we don't have wealth to pass down, you know, traditionally. So that conversation is just not talked about at all. So I want to. I get, I don't know, accustomed to having that conversation with our younger generation and as they come up, like, you know, they know what to do long-term with their funds. So, um, those conversations in those sessions are going to be taught by, uh, Kalamazoo promise.

alum. A lot of them, I went to school with, so they're in the different fields. So like investing real estate, uh, credit management, entrepreneurship, um, each one of those sessions is going to be taught by, by an alum, um, five week program. Uh, that fifth week is going to be [00:18:00] just essentially another mixer with those students.

And it was going to be juniors and seniors from KPS. Um, So if they have any questions or are looking for more resources, I have different financial institutions come in just to, you know, um, put those kids under their wing and just teach them the ropes on whatever they're interested in.

Dr. John Oliver: So for those folks who are listening and watching now unpack what financial literacy is. I know you listed a couple of things, investing real estate entrepreneurs. Yeah, that's touching like big buckets. So if you could unpack some of those things, what, what does it mean to be financially literate?

Donté Hudson: Um, I mean, basically just knowing how money works, you know, once you know how money works, then you can figure out, okay, how can I make my money work for me?

You know, every dollar is an employee and that's the mindset, you know, you should [00:19:00] have. Um, so if you're investing, you know, you've made some residual income, some passive income, um, just even knowing what that means, you know, like, I didn't know what that meant until, you know, I was like 25, 26, you know, cause I never, um, had that conversation with anybody about that.

So if you can know what that means on an, uh, at an early age, you know, you've got a leg up on the rest of society, right?

Dr. John Oliver: So, how did you get to the, the, the title money talks? I have my own ideas because there's a second part of that that I've heard at coming up money talks and other things walk, but we're not, we're not going to go into that, but just the money talks.

Donté Hudson: Um, my, my guy, Jacob, he actually came up with that. That was a,

Dr. John Oliver: Like your guy and my guy, Jacob, the Jacob Waggoner man.

Oh, nice. Okay. So tell me more. Go ahead. I interrupted. I apologize.

Donté Hudson: You're good, you're good. We, uh, we're sitting there just [00:20:00] brainstorming. Uh, I think it was me and Amy were just in there brainstorming around what we could call it.

Cause I'm like financial literacy. That just sounds boring, right?

Yeah. You know,

Dr. John Oliver: no attention grabber

Donté Hudson: so Jacob just walks in and we're like, yeah, bro, we trying to figure out a name for this. He was like, I mean, why not just money

talk talks.

Dr. John Oliver: And then he dropped the mic and walked out. Right.

Donté Hudson: It's literally, that's what he did actually.

He was like, yeah, I'll be back. I'm like, but he just, he just come up with a gem and just walked out, like right. But no, that's, uh, it was perfect, you know? Um, cause that's essentially what, what it is or just talking about money, you know? So I'm like, why didn't I think of that? But no, it was perfect. It was right on time.

Um, and it grabbed your attention. Like I sent out an email to all the kids and you know, it was right there. It just, it was just right. It was just there. So, um, so

Dr. John Oliver: by asking that question, um, you know, you actually did what you do, what you describe you, you're a point guard. [00:21:00] You lay you, you just bounce it right into him.

He received that assist, gave it right to you when you talk. Perfect. I don't know if he laid it up where he just like slammed it in, but I don't, you know, I'm thinking Jacob, knowing him, he's been on a bunch of times. He's here now. He's always here. He's just not always on camera. Right? So he's here now.

He's probably listening. I don't know how he's feeling about us talking about him. Uh, we know you're here, man. Um, and I'm gonna just say, you know, knowing, like I was saying, knowing him and what I know about him, he's not a showy ostentatious type of guy, you know? You know, he could have jammed it, but I could see him.

He just like, yeah. You know, finger, roll it up in there. That's what I would think. I don't know. But that's what I, that's the story we're going with. That makes sense. That it feels good like that. Tony, Tony, Tony song. Uh, so tell me, tell me something I haven't asked. You know, I always like to make sure it's like, I have lists of questions.

I have things I want to know. [00:22:00] I follow up with the things. But I also realized that I don't think of everything to ask. So what have I not asked you that, you know, should be included in this podcast? Um

Donté Hudson: Hmm. I mean, you do your due diligence, so yeah, I can't really think of anything off the top of my head.

Well, I mean, I do want the people to know that.

Whenever you see the Kalamazoo promise. Like I said, I'm a team guy. I play sports my whole life. Um, there's a hand from everybody, you know, within the promise in every project that we do. So whether it be something in our workforce department or the alumni department, um, you know, reconnection department, I have a hand in that just like everybody else does, you know?

So, um, whether you working [00:23:00] with just Dr. John or myself or Von Washington, or Bob Jorth, like out, we're all in this together, you know, we're all, um, helping each other out, um, with whatever project or whatever, you know, assignment that we have. So you're not just dealing with one individual you're dealing with the Kalamazoo promise as a team, you know, Yeah.

Dr. John Oliver: Nice.

So for folks who are unable to attend or participate in money talks, how could they get more information or learn about it themselves? What, where, where could they connect with that?

Donté Hudson: So if you go to our website, um, Jacob and I were just having this conversation, we're going to post, uh, all the sessions uh, on our website, uh, just kalamazoopromise.com, um, so that you can have an opportunity to at least hear about, you know, some of the terminology and, and, um, [00:24:00] just different avenues to, you know, make your money work for you. Uh, we'll have it on the website for you to see, uh, probably a couple of weeks after, you know, just got to edit it a little bit, but, um, yeah.

And then it's going to be something that's going to be annual. Yeah, cause it's for juniors and seniors. So, you know, you're going to have a new group of juniors and seniors every year. And the importance of financial literacy is not going to go away anytime soon. So they'll have an opportunity to, to get that information.

Dr. John Oliver: One of the final things that I ask and any conversation or interviews, what questions do you have for me? I can't only just offer, I gotta be able to receive two. So it's two way street. Any questions for me?

Donté Hudson: Um,

Dr. John Oliver: Played a jeopardy song.

Donté Hudson: That's too much pressure. Don't do that. No, I don't have any questions. I like you say, we're friends now, so,

Dr. John Oliver: [00:25:00] but they don't know that they don't know that. So they don't know what you may ask. They may want to know. Uh, so step up to the free throw line. A game is tight. It's a one in one.

You just tied up the game. You got one more shot. To ask this question for the benefit of those who are listening and are watching. Okay. Don't brick it, man. Come on.

Donté Hudson: What advice or not advice? I like how you say, what, what nuggets would you have for the young Kalamazoo promise soon to be professional coming up?

Well, what nuggets would you have for them?

Dr. John Oliver: Great question. I thank you. Sank that, that shot. That's a great question. So miss, I gave you the point, that's the point. So team promise for the win. Now I'm about to yam it. All right. So I'm not laying finger roll. Like my man, Jake, I'm looking God, Darryl Dawkins, you know, before Shaq breaking back boards, I'm going there.

Um, [00:26:00] a nugget would be, since you are a Kalamazoo promise, student, scholar, or alum you have people, as Donte mentioned that are connected to you who are invested in your success because your success, which is for you, it's also beneficial for the community. It's beneficial for the Kalamazoo promise. I would dare to say it's beneficial for the state.

And so knowing that you have the Kalamazoo promise in your back pocket, Up to a hundred percent of fees and tuitions covered, plus connections with supports and services. You have an opportunity to lean into your, your dream. You have an opportunity to lean into your talents. You have an opportunity

opportunity to lean into those things that are even of just interest to you and you can level up, you can skill up, you can credential up.

And you have 10 [00:27:00] years to do it 145 credits. You know how that plays out to do things that other communities that do not have the promise like we have it in this community to explore those things. It makes a world of difference for you personally and makes a world of difference for your, your, your parents, caregivers, providers, um, because even if, and even when they've saved and prepared for your post secondary life, they have support and the promise where they don't have to pay for certain things. So then they could recycle those funds and other ways to support you the support to community. So I would provide a nugget to mind. It's a lean into those dreams, lean into those, um, inklings, you know, inclinations or just ideas and just reach out because people are available and ready to.

That would be what I was assessed, drops the mic. Boom. We're [00:28:00] not going to drop the mic. It's a nice mic. So we don't want to drop them. We'll place them down gently. So good brother. You are in the clear, um, you can come up for air. That deep dive was, was great. I've learned and seen some great things while we're down here deep and hopefully everyone else who's listening and or watching feels the same way.

Yeah. Again, this is deep dives with Dr. John at the Kalamazoo promise. Uh, you can find out more about. My colleague, my friend, the man, the myth, the legend, Dante Hutson shared with us about alumni engagement. Um, and you can definitely find that on our website, Kalamazoo promise. Plus we have other places with LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, everywhere.

We're like, we're there, man. We're in a social sphere. So reach out connect. Um, and we're hoping that you'll hear us and see us soon. And even come down and check us out. That'll be great. We're at 1 8 0 east water street, [00:29:00] 1 8 0 east water street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, uh, right downtown. And as I've said before, I call this the promise building.

So you know where you are. Thank you for joining us. And until the next time deep dives with Dr. John at Kalamazoo promise,

Malcolm Jones: the moment I realized I wanted to be an EMT, I was on the highway. I witnessed a semi turn. At the time, I didn't have any skills other than first state and CPR see a paramedic pulling on the scene, then being the trained professionals at that moment, I kind of realized that this is what I wanted to do.

So I went back to Kalamazoo central and somebody saw my counselor and said, I know what I want to do with my life. I want to become a paramedic. My name is Malcolm Jones. I graduated Kalamazoo central in 2017. I'm currently using my Kalamazoo promise to go to paramedic school. And after I'll go to nursing school, I [00:30:00] remember being in elementary school, knowing that I was covered with the Kalamazoo promise.

As I got older, I realized more detailed what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. And the promise has allowed me to do that, but we had testings and clinicals. So the first time taking it, I didn't pass. Through the Kalamazoo promise it allowed me to actually sign up for the course again and to try a second time.

That's really been one of my favorite parts about the promise it takes into account that you're human. It allows you to make mistakes and come back from them. It's allowed me to pursue my dreams to help people. And it's also taken the stress off of. I know, as long as I don't let myself down in the promise, won't let me down.

It's really important to me, the fact that I can be in someone's life and actually use my experience to help someone. And I can bring this all down to one moment and it can mean something to their life. It can change their life forever. I don't think you get into EMS for the money. I think you do it because you [00:31:00] love it.

And the promise has allowed me to do something that I love.