

Deep Dive w/ Dr. John | EP 004- Amy Terzino

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 dive with Dr. John. This is an opportunity to talk with folks who are colleagues, who are friends and who are part of the Kalamazoo promise community. Today is special for me because not only do we get to talk to [00:01:00] a colleague, a friend, but someone who special to the Kalamazoo promise community.

And that is the one and only Amy.

Amy Terzino: happy to be here. Dr.

Dr. John Oliver: John, glad to have you glad to have you. So I want to make sure that the space is open for you to share your story, share your journey. Just bring us, bring us into how you've arrived. At this space at this place at this time, you can go as deep as you like.

That's why we're going with deep dives. Um, but you can go as shallow as you like. Now I will follow up and ask other questions, um, unpacking some things that you share. So never feel like you have to tell it all because I'll be listening and writing some notes and asking follow up questions. All right.

Okay. Nice for number one, if you can bring your mic a little bit. Because we want to make sure that we hear everything that you're saying. Okay. All right. Nice. Nice. So tell me a little bit about yourself.

Amy Terzino: Um, [00:02:00] I am the operations manager here at the Kalamazoo promise, um, that is essentially office operations.

And I support other team members would their, their specific projects and their specific initiatives, which is probably the biggest joy of my, my job. Um, because I love being involved in so many of the, the projects here that are going on and, um, and helping students reach their, their promise. Um, that's very, very special to me.

My journey with the promise started. Um, when it was announced, I was living in Chicago and I, I was pregnant and I remember the announcement and, and hearing it, I don't know how, I mean, it was obviously in regional news or something to that effect. And I said, wow, that would be so great. For my child. Um, I [00:03:00] wish I could get, I could get that opportunity for my child.

And, and I thought, and then in the back of my head, I said, how I wonder what a place like that would be like to work, you know, I had, that would be really cool. Um, and then we went, um, at that time in our life, uh, we decided to move to California. So we packed up when I was about eight, little over eight months pregnant, moved to California.

And, uh, that was where my daughter Ellen was born. Um, and, uh, she, she, we lived there for five years and then we had a moment in our lives where we just did not, we would just discovered we didn't know how to live. And the, on the west coast, we had a wonderful time. We were in Sandy, we were in San Diego. My husband worked, it was working at, um, university of California at San Diego.

And, um, oh, that's another [00:04:00] part of my journey there too is at that time in my life, I made the decision. Um, when I found out I was pregnant, that I was going to take a year off and I was going to spend that year with my daughter. So that was. I wouldn't say midlife crisis. It was my midlife gift to myself.

So that year, that first year for life, we just enjoyed each other and enjoyed, um, enjoyed motherhood. And it was wonderful. But, um, after five years living in California and wildfires and earthquakes and natural disasters that I had not grown up with and did not understand, uh, we decided to, uh, move back to the Midwest because we were fundamentally midwesterners.

Dr. John Oliver: So where'd you grow up,

Amy Terzino: Indiana. My husband and I are both from Indiana. I'm from Southern Indiana.

My husband's from Northern Indiana. So, so we had that in common. Um, and so we, we, we knew we wanted to be near family and my [00:05:00] husband's family is in the region and Western, um, the job at Western that for my husband came up and it was perfect for us, cause it would be near it. W w my husband's father was, was not in the best of condition. So we, we wanted to be near him. And then my sister in law and her family live in Saugatuck. So it was just ideal location-wise and then I remembered the promise. And I was like, wow, that could happen for my family.

Because at the time we decided to move back, Ellen was just going to be going into kindergarten. So it was, it was a, it was a deal sealer, you know, um, when we were making choices. And so we decided to move to Kalamazoo and I made a conscious choice, um, when I was doing my job search when we moved back here, um, to [00:06:00] be a part of the community I wanted to, I wanted to do a, I wanted to do something directly for and with the community.

So, um, I had the opportunity to work with the United way and United way gave me that first opportunity to, to excuse me, be able to meet and understand the Kalamazoo community and learn how beautiful and wonderful a place it is to live. So, so that's where we landed. Um, and then Ellen started school in KPS and is, um, is 16 now.

Dr. John Oliver: Oh, wow. How are you?

Amy Terzino: I'm fine. Thank you. Uh, we just conquered the driver's license experience, which was, uh, that was. That was a learning curve for me as well as my daughter. But, um, she's an excellent driver and she's an excellent human being actually I'm

soaking up a little bit.

Dr. John Oliver: So, [00:07:00] so making those decisions, so you heard the announcement you're in Chicago and where were you doing at the time?

Amy Terzino: I was in the kitchen, I was probably listening to, I was probably on NPR honestly, or something to that effect. It was probably listening to the news. Um, and, and, and just, you know, makes you contemplate parenthood. And, you know, when you have stories like that, come up and, and how am I going to provide opportunity for my child at that time when she's making choices and, and wanting to go to college and wanting to dream and wanting to, to, to learn and embracing all that.

I mean, I made all the assumptions that Ellen was going to be the type of person that would want to learn and want to. Go on to college. So it just made me think, well, how am I going to do that?

Dr. John Oliver: And so you made the choice, you came back, you all came back to Midwest, um, landed in Kalamazoo. Um, so now you're a part of the [00:08:00] Kalamazoo community.

Um, how did you decide where, where to live?

Amy Terzino: That's interesting. Well, a lot of that does come from being directed from a realtor. Um, and, and we were at a disadvantage that we had one weekend to come out, find a place to live and go and, and figure it out. The person that we were working with, um, made, made the positive assumption that we wanted to have the promise as a part of.

Experience. I don't know that we actually, I think we made the assumption that that would be a given when we moved to Kalamazoo. So he exclusively showed

us

properties in Kalamazoo. Um, and we landed in the windshield neighborhood and our experience [00:09:00] in KPS has been. Exceptional, um, from Winchell to maple street to Loy Norrix, uh, and Ellen has had just a tremendous experience all along the way.

Dr. John Oliver: So you mentioned the opportunity for you to support your daughter. Um, not only in her educational journey and learning academics, but also just having the opportunity for her to dream and to imagine, and for you to be able to support her in that. So what has that been like?

Amy Terzino: So

when I, when I came to work for the promise, that was certainly an opportunity for them.

Um, and to continue my journey of giving back to the community or, or having the opportunity to facilitate that and help others give back to the community and the promise, get back to the community, what the promise has [00:10:00] done for me and my family and just the dynamic it's allowed our family to dream and especially Ellen giving her the opportunity to think beyond limitations, um, and

just to, to be able to find her joy and find her where she finds that fun and, and move forward and move toward that.

I don't think if we didn't have the promise in the back of our head, we would be that casual about choices and casual is the wrong word that,

N/A: uh,

Amy Terzino: not being, we would be more stressed. We would be more concerned. We would be [00:11:00] more, um, afraid.

Dr. John Oliver: Um, so having the promise has helped to relieve and reduce. Remove some of those, those concerns or fears.

Yes.

Amy Terzino: It's, it's allowed as parents to be a part of her joyful journey and that's been a wonderful gift.

Dr. John Oliver: Okay.

So now, so now that you've opened that up, so let's unpack that a little bit. So what have been some, or Ellen's um, dreams or aspirations or what's her journey been like toward utilizing her promise?

Amy Terzino: You know, that's really interesting. Ellen is a musical theater geek. Right? I don't think she'd be mad if I said that. And you know, the, the community itself fundamentally has so many resources for that pursuit and that journey from the opportunities given to the community, through the Gilmore foundation, [00:12:00] uh, the EFA program and KPS.

There are so many, and there's, there's fundamentally so many arts organizations in this community that just make that sort of a given. And, and it's interesting, cause I, I feel like when we, when Ellen someday goes outside of the Kalamazoo community, she's going to go wait a minute. There's not, you know, more than one theater in this community.

And I mean, you know, live theater theater in this community. She's going to have expectations of what culture and, and the arts are in a community. And, um, and it's based around all the wonderful opportunities and the wonderful resources in Kalamazoo. So, so she, she began in middle school at maple street, uh, to.[00:13:00]

To, to just love the, the love, the theater and perform. And in that space, she had such support from her teachers and the choir program. Uh, Julie Davis was just incredibly supportive to her, um, and taught her so much about music. She, she's also been a huge, uh,

She's she's been a student at crescendo pretty much, um, crescendo arts academy in Kalamazoo. Um, pretty much ever since she was in the fourth grade. Wow. Um, maybe, and she she'd started with violin. Um, not, uh, not her best. So at which you can't be great at everything. Um, and then she's moved on to voice, uh, piano and guitar and all, [00:14:00] all opportunities available through crescendo

and she's also been fortunate enough to, um, take advantage of the, uh, EFA grant that's available to students that are studying music, um, that is, um, through the Gilmore foundation. And that has, that has been such a resource for our family, um, to another one to help her pursue what she enjoys. So, uh, so she's had many opportunities for lessons and dance through ballet arts, which is another community partner.

That's just tremendous about what they do. Um, and, uh, so now in Loy Norrix high school and their theater program, um, it's just, it's just been a path that hasn't required many bridges. It's [00:15:00] been a, it's been a pretty seamless journey in this community to help her, uh, take her where or point her toward the direction she wants to go.

We haven't, you know, I don't know if she'll ever land where ever that is, but as long as she's doing something that is creative and something that is fun and something that is joyful for her. That's what I want. So

Dr. John Oliver: music and theater, aficionado, um, we'll unpack the geek part. Um, I'm a, um, self-proclaimed and proud nerd geek, um, technology, music, um, all those things.

So I, I feel what you're saying, what you mean. So with her being in music and theater, what does she performed in? Where has she shown her talent and, um, shared it with the community?

Amy Terzino: Well, she really enjoys. And she enjoys dancing. Uh, she is currently, um, rehearsing to be Belle and, uh, beauty and the beast at center stage theater, which is [00:16:00] just a dream come true for her.

It's just, she's really, that's where she's geeking out about it because the idea of being a, um, uh, a thinking reading princess, For young women, you know, I know there's still a little bit of the Disney stereotype of things going on there, but she, she actively carries her Jane Austin book bag to every rehearsal and makes it very clear that she is a, um, you know, a thinking, thinking princess and an empowered princess.

And, but she's enjoying that and she's, she

she's

Amy Terzino: also performed, um, In the theater program at Loy Norrix, she was in some things rotten and she played Bea there this, this past year. And that was just so much fun to be back in the theater, you know, performing live, being out of, um, [00:17:00] no, you know, virtual space.

Yeah. Yeah. And I think that elevated just the experience of being isolated for so long. Really, uh, elevated her appreciation for performing and, and she sees it more, I mean, more as a gift than she ever has before to, to be able to do those things. And, uh, I think that's where we were. Where were we, Where we've landed now.

We are starting our journey for college and starting conversations about where we're going to go and where are we going to apply? Where are we going to, what are we going to visit? And, um, so that's, that's the next step. She does want to pursue musical theater in college and we'll see where that goes.

Dr. John Oliver: You're rolling with this. This is, this is, [00:18:00] this is good stuff. So we're talking about parental perspectives. Um, and so you were sharing on the conversations that you're having, but they were conversations that happened prior that allowed or gave space or support for her to know like, Hey, this is, I can go all in.

How did you engage in that? So for parents who are watching and for students who are watching, who have these ideas who have these dreams, that may be nontraditional academic paths, but we have the promise. So like we mentioned, you can dream and step outside of those, um, traditional boundaries and express what your feelings and desires are.

How did you get to that, that conversation? When did it start?

Amy Terzino: Very early. I was very intentional about watching where she found joy, where she found fun. And when she said, I want to learn how to do that, I would think, okay, let's make that happen. So when she said at a very early age that I want to learn how to play the violin, okay.

Let's make [00:19:00] it happen. And we had the resources in the community to do that. And. And then that just led to the next thing, you know? So she, she got a found a, you know, an understanding of music and what music looks like feels like, and, and an understanding of how you can express yourself through music. And, and that led to the next opportunity and, you know, middle-school and learning and learning how to sing and how to, how to sight read music.

And, uh, so that was another level of music. And then another level of, of learning, how to express oneself through music, and then theater happened and musical theater and learning about musical theater. It's just a whole new world opens up to you when you have that interest, um, because there's such a history and there's such a future and there's such a now and Hamilton was happening during that time.

And, and just a whole new, a new, um, [00:20:00] revolution of understanding musical theater and excitement. Um, I remember every middle school, you know, kid was knew all the lyrics to the whole show. I mean, yeah, it would be cruising with her best friend and they would sing the whole, like if we went on a long road trip, you know, up north, they do the whole show in the car, you know, in the backseat.

And that was, that was joyful. Um, and so I just, I paid attention to. She enjoyed what she, what she was, you know, moving toward and, you know, the, the, the ironic thing, or I don't know if it's ironic. I don't is that she's always been a good student in the, you know, in all the stem stuff too. Like, I didn't, I didn't sacrifice or we didn't sacrifice, or she didn't sacrifice.

Um, not learning the other stuff along the [00:21:00] way, too. So it just made her want to go to school even more because she had, she found opportunities that she was interested in, but she also took advantage of all the other learnings as well she and became a tremendous student.

Dr. John Oliver: So you find a way to make an, and both.

Amy Terzino: Exactly.

Dr. John Oliver: So you didn't have to sacrifice one or the other, you found a way to merge it in and total person

Amy Terzino: I truly believe that learning music and learning that helps you learn other things. I really believe in that concept and that, that science, um, and. I think she would be a good subject. I wish we'd done some, maybe some brain scans early in life and, you know, contrast and compare.

But I really do believe that music is, uh, is, uh, helps you learn other things.

Dr. John Oliver: So this, this music in theater, um, that she embraced. Was that something that you [00:22:00] planted? Are you musically inclined and you.

Amy Terzino: My husband and I are both theater geeks. So, you know, I oftentimes, like I often have to check myself, is it, am I pushing her because of things that I'm interested in or I'm, you know, wishing on her. I mean, that's always a parental, um, fear. Is that, are you doing something? Is she trying to make you happier?

You know, you've got to check to see if she's trying to make you happy or if she's trying to make herself happy. So, yes, my husband and I are both theater geeks geeks. My husband's, my husband's uncle, uh, lived on the lower east side of New York city and he would go visit him,

you know, when he was young, all through his life. And. Not the thing that I thought I get choked up on. Um, [00:23:00] but he provided my husband the opportunity to see so many shows, so many seriously good, um, artists and, and, and took him to not just the mainstream stuff. The, the, the, you know, the off, off Broadway, he was the cool uncle.

And so. I think that's probably one of the key components of why he and I were drawn together is we both had this love for musical theater and theater.

Dr. John Oliver: So how did y'all meet?

Amy Terzino: Very, very, not the greatest story, but I had a friend in college and she was in love with this person, um, at. I went to a, uh, a small private college in Southern Indiana and she needed a wing man to go express this this emotion [00:24:00] to this young man at a, at a graduation party.

And I said, okay, I will be your wing, man. Let's go, let's go do this. And so I really, you know, I wanted it to work out for her. It didn't work out for her, but I

met my husband. And, um, we had great chemistry from the beginning. Um, I can't say enough good things about my husband. He's tremendous human being and we've been married.

I also had to ask him this morning, this question was like, how long have you been married? Oh yeah. Yeah. So we've been married, uh, 31 years in July. Oh yeah. Yeah. So it's been a journey, um, and a really, really wonderful.

Dr. John Oliver: So theater's running through the family and it's found its way with the daughter. What brings you joy?

You mentioned joy a lot and finding joy and supporting and embracing and encouraging joy. What brings you joy?

Amy Terzino: Well, um, I, I find [00:25:00] a lot of joy here at the promise. I find a lot of joy working here and I think part of that, we have so many promise scholars that have come to work here at the promise. And that provides me a tremendous amount of joy.

The, the, the energy and the excitement from young people is intoxicating and seeing the young promise professionals that I work with really. Do their stuff and do, do what they love and do what finds them joy is really, really special. And being able to support that is really, really special. And, you know, we were [00:26:00] joking around with Jake, um, and how he's been a part of my joy and my journey here.

And. So, so also finding, you know, building these relationships with your colleagues. I've never had relationships with colleagues like I have at the promise. It is a deeper and more profound, uh, experience as far as colleagues go is at least from my perspective. And that is a tremendous skill. And it, and I find I'm incredibly grateful for that.

Dr. John Oliver: So you mentioned Jacob, Jake, and him being part of your journey. And we were talking a little bit off camera and before we started and I, I share with both of you that when it, when it came up, if it came up, I would dive a little deeper and ask a little bit more. So what about. Jacob. And in previous episodes we've talked [00:27:00] about, Jacob is always here.

He's always with us, even though he's not on camera, he's always here. And his mic is on, you know, he's doing all the important things for people that matter, you know, and his mic is on. And so, yeah, I'm talking to you, man. Hey, what's

up? He doesn't have a camera on him, but you can hear his voice. Um, so in previous episode, we've talked about him always been here.

So you mentioned him. So tell me more about that colleague that promise professional and that relationship that's established. What, tell me more.

Amy Terzino: So, so when I came to work at the promise and I think it was 2015, it was, it was Bob Von and myself. And, um, I came on to work. I worked with communities in schools and the promise soon after that, um, Jake came in as an intern and started working for the promise as an intern. So he and I worked very closely together with supporting the scholarship administration. And I [00:28:00] remember he's always had my back. He's always had my back from the beginning when I was just getting my, my, trying to get my sea legs on some of the importing and some of the technicals aspect of the scholarship administration.

And I had done a, a student import and Jake was following up with doing some the next step of that. And he found like a huge mistake that I had made. And, and he, he was, he was. He, he found it, he showed it, he shared it and it was, it was something he and I had to clean up together. So he helped me clean up that.

And we were going line by line, line by line. So we got to know each other pretty [00:29:00] well with that project, but he had my back and, um, And we did that together. So we've been probably problem-solving together for a very long time. And, you know, even, I know a lot of, uh, organizations had difficulties during the pandemic, you know, and being isolated.

Dr. John Oliver: We say something here that, um, there's there are no tears, just sometimes your eye breaks and it leaks a little bit. So you're all good.

Amy Terzino: So, so, you know, isolation during the pandemic and working from home, that was hard, you know, especially from somebody like me, who really does not like to work from the home space.

And, uh, so Jake had my back then. Hmm. You know, always checking in, always making sure, you know, the collaboration between the two of us [00:30:00] and, um, being able to work together really was really powerful during that time. And just being able to work together and, and create and make things happen. And, and now that we've, you know, moving on to now, um, we're still collaborating.

We're still having a lot of fun. Um, he. Like Kaboom blossomed into the, this amazing human. I mean, he was an amazing human, but he's doing so many great things now, especially with a promise and, uh, to be able to still tag along is really another gift to me. So, yeah.

Dr. John Oliver: Nice Kaboom blossomed. I'm going to make a shirt for Jacob to says Kaboom blossom, um, and just supporting and tagging in on that and just giving an amen and a second, that that's just the type of person that I've [00:31:00] found him to be also, you know, so for four years, five years, maybe just as genuine person, real cool laid back, but super meticulous and precise, um, supportive, you know, informed he's a tech guru.

He's a, he's a tech geek. I think we, we bonded on that a lot of ways in this podcast. In so many ways is, is representative of that. So, and just full disclosure. I am also an employee here at the Kalamazoo promise and knowing that the folks here are genuine, um, and seeing, and hearing how they've, um, how they've moved within the community, how they've moved within their schooling and now they're professionals. And they found ways to merge that together. Um, it's, it's really awesome. It's really awesome stuff. So I, I definitely feel what you're saying and I agree not that you need that.

Amy Terzino: No affirmation is always good.

Dr. John Oliver: It's still, still good stuff. [00:32:00] Um, so we're talking still again parent parental perspectives or in, from the promise, what would be a, um, a cheat sheet of sorts for parents on how to better understand the promise and better support their young person and utilizing their promise scholarship.

Amy Terzino: It is just stay engaged the whole way, you know, try to try to stay engaged and, and look out for opportunity because this community provides opportunity and, um, state. And, and if you don't see opportunity, you know, come to the promise, ask, um, or call the promise, we can, we can provide suggestions. And I mean, all along the journey, I mean, one of the, [00:33:00] one of the things about the promise is that we want to accomplish is to, to help parents and to help students all along the journey to get to the promise.

And use the promise, but, and, and when we say the promise, we can, it's so amazing. Now how many different ways you can use the promise? So it's not just a bachelor's degree program. You can, you can, you can use it with trade programs. You can use it with, um, and get stackable credentials. You can, you can do so many different things.

Um, I think that maybe be the, the cheat sheet thing for, for parents is that, uh, we, we share all the different ways, all the different opportunities and ER, and early and, and, and, and help parents see the. All the different ways early so that when they see that joy, when they see that sparkle in their child, they can go, [00:34:00] oh, wow.

Okay. So, so maybe we can use the promise in that way, and maybe we can, maybe we can support our child here and now, and that will get them to the next step and to the next thing and the next thing and the next thing. So I guess that would be my, my advice to parents is, is just pay attention. Find out what's possible with the promise, find out and watch what your child is doing and what brings them joy.

Dr. John Oliver: Nice. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you want to make sure that is shared, lifted up?

Do you have any questions for me can never be a one way street. So I have to go both ways.

Amy Terzino: We have to, we have to definitely, uh, continue our conversation around musical theater and music. Cause I know you are a music geek as well, so I would enjoy, uh, continuing that, that conversation.

Dr. John Oliver: [00:35:00] Yeah, that will be cool.

And I appreciate it. You I'm introducing my daughter, Joel, to your Ellen and just for them to be able to meet and you'd sharing and talking with Joel a lot. Cause Joelle's, she's, she's leaning into her, um, her musical and theatrical ability.

Amy Terzino: Well, talk about, uh, another young person that sparkles. Joelle sparkles for sure.

Dr. John Oliver: I appreciate it. You're not gonna make my eyebrows. I'm going to stop right there. I'm not going to leak on the closeout. Um, so if there's nothing else, um, we appreciate you being here. Um, we appreciate you period, and definitely appreciate you stopping in for a deep dive with Dr. John sharing a little bit about the parental perspective.

Um, if there's nothing else we appreciate you and we'll sign out. This has been deep dive with Dr. John at the Kalamazoo promise with my colleague and friend Amy Terzino.

Student 1: [00:36:00] I am young and I am positive. I am the future and I'm going to tell it like it is, I will not let anything stand in my way. My eyes are on the Kalamazoo promise and they're going to stay that way.

N/A: That future future, future, future

future.

Student 1: With my Kalamazoo promise, I love to get a life and make a job. And I hope to achieve in something. I want to have money and an education after this

Artrella Cohn: CAPS or community advocates for parents and students is an afterschool enrichment program that focuses on providing additional [00:37:00] academic support for students of all backgrounds. We started it after the announcement of the Kalamazoo promise to really try to make the playing field a little bit more equitable for students who may not come from a great deal of means, but who has the same passionate energy towards wanting to obtain their promise.

Student 1: Caps means a lot to me, like the trips would get to go on the little games that we play and everything. And then it's just, again, people here and

Artrella Cohn: The CAPS community really represents what's possible when you have a consistent set of caring adults who are really behind young people and believing their full potential.

The connections that the cap students are making, it's going to be lifelong. They're going to always remember the relationships because it's really a family grassroots environment. Our staff and volunteers are going to go beyond, um, for cap students and being able to be so closely aligned with the work of the Kalamazoo promise and making sure that all students [00:38:00] are able to fulfill that pathway. We're going to be around for years to come.