



Transcript of Social Cause Panel Discussion: Life Skills

Hosted by: Lindsey Barta (Magnified Giving, Associate Director)

Participants: Alison Kaufman (Magnified Giving), Caroline Ray (Magnified Giving), and Julie Whitten (Breakthrough Cincinnati), Jamie Sivrais (A Voice for the Innocent)

Length of Video: 32:49

Question 1: So I'm going to have each of our panelists introduce themselves and share [about] their organization and how their mission aligns with life skills.

Question 2: I would love to hear your take on how this kind of work is impactful to our community? Why should students support this kind of work and what impact does it have on our community?

Question 3: How are your organizations able to collaborate within the community to achieve your missions and maybe that's among each other but also how are you able to collaborate with other organizations to achieve your missions?

Question 4: Speaking directly to the students who are listening if this is resonating with them if they're interested in getting involved in this kind of organization or getting behind a mission that improves quality of life, what advice would you give to those students who are interested how they can get behind these missions?

Lindsey (0:00-1:15): Hi everyone, my name is Lindsey, I with Magnified Giving. I am here today with Julie, Caroline, Jamie, and Allison. We are going to talk about Life Skills as a social cause. I am excited for you to hear this one because I'm guessing you haven't thought about this as a social cause before. Just to give you an idea of what I mean by Life Skills, that refers to a mission that supports individuals or groups to improve the quality of life which may involve their living situations abilities, job skills, mental health challenges, leadership development, etc. The organizations who are represented here today all align with this idea of life skills but there are lots of other organizations [that also align with the social cause Life Skills]. In fact, Magnified Giving is an organization that promotes Life Skills. **So I'm going to have each of our panelists introduce themselves and share [about] their organization and how their mission aligns with life skills.** So Caroline, can I start with you?

Caroline (1:15-1:49): Hi everyone, I'm Caroline Ray from Magnified Giving. I'm their Director of Education. Magnified Giving is an organization that teaches philanthropy to students for life. So our Life Skills come at education, when education meets life skills. My particular background is in education and I can't wait to talk to you a little bit more about how that has developed and how it interconnects with this life skills social cause. So thank you for joining us today.

Lindsey (1:49-1:51): Awesome, thanks Caroline. Allison...

Alison (1:51-2:53) : Hi, I'm Alison Kaufman and I'm also with Magnified Giving. I am their Director of Programs. And Caroline just did a beautiful job of summarizing the connection of what Magnified Giving is doing, as far as education and philanthropy and community engagement. Because that is so key to our life skill and personal development. Thank you all for joining us today, and we are looking forward to educating you on the importance of developing your life skills.

Julie (2:53-3:28) : Hi, good day everyone, I'm Julie Whitten with Breakthrough Cincinnati. Breakthrough is an organization that's been working for almost 30 years in our area to help underrepresented students achieve their secondary and post-secondary goals. That means thriving in high school academically but also personally and making their way to college. One of the things that I think is really unique and special about Breakthrough is that it creates a space, an equitable space, for student voice. We serve middle and high school students. It also creates an opportunity for young adults in high school and college to try their hand at teaching and developing their leadership skills. Looking forward to talking with everyone today.

Jamie (3:28-5:18): Thank you so much for having me, my name is Jamie Sivrais. I am the founder of an organization called A Voice for the Innocent. We provide a community of support for people who have been affected by sexual violence. For us the way that looks, it's an anonymous space online where people can share stories, they can connect with our incredible team of trained volunteers who then respond to those stories and offer compassion and offer validation and then can help people find the resources that are available to them in their own cities. So when I think about Life Skills in that respect, I think for us it goes two ways: one we are having a support system for people who have experienced trauma like that, and then to be connected to healing. [second way:] That in and of itself, you mentioned mental health, that can be a huge relief. But when we think about our volunteer team too, it's building empathy and through the kind of work that we do the empathy that gets built in that work...extends into conversations about other trauma conversations, about race conversations, about poverty, and it allows you to hear stories and hear experiences from people who are not in all ways like us. So I think building empathy is an enormous life skill and I definitely think that happens for our volunteers.

Lindsey (5:20-7:39) : Thank you everyone, I am just going to share a couple of other examples to give the students who are watching an idea of other organizations that you might know that also fall under this umbrella. Another great example here in Cincinnati is Dress for Success, they empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support.

They also provide professional attire for women who are seeking jobs but maybe don't have clothes that they need to go to interviews. They provide development tools to help women thrive in working in life. So that is another example. Any kind of mentoring organization. Guiding Light Mentoring is another great example here in Cincinnati. There are a lot of other organizations that have mentoring components that are dedicated to providing positive role models, teaching relationship skills, and developing character. Some students, another thing that you might be familiar with in schools are career and technical student organizations. These would be organizations that operate within your schools that are extracurricular organizations that align with certain career pathways. So if you're familiar with the FFA or FCCLA Deca business professionals of America, SkillsUSA, HOSA, any of those organizations. Those are usually attached to a nonprofit organization that would fall under life skills. The goal of these organizations is to help students build skills and further their knowledge by participating in activities, events, or competitions. So if you're involved with any of those organizations you're also benefiting from a life skills organization. And obviously you're involved in Magnified Giving so you're most certainly impacted by a life skills organization which is really cool. So hopefully that you know starts to get the wheels turning there are a lot of other examples. Just think about any organization that's actively working to improve quality of life or help people develop certain kinds of skills. I'm going to turn it over to our panelists. I have some questions to ask them and the first is that, **I would love to hear your take on how this kind of work is impactful to our community? Why should students support this kind of work and what impact does it have on our community?**

Jamie (7:42-9:50): I'm happy to jump in first. When it comes to A Voice for the Innocent, we deal with a topic that is considered very taboo and very difficult for a lot of people to talk about. We've gotten to talk with people all across the country and we've gotten to say, "hey, did you know that you have a resource center right here in your town?" and they look at the flyers that we hand out for all 50 states and they and they say, "I had no idea that's actually right down the street from me. It's because of how hard it can be for a lot of people to talk about [that] they don't learn about the resources that are available to them right right in their own neighborhoods and a lot of times those resources are really vital and free a lot of times. When somebody [has] been hurt by sexual violence and they can get free counseling or they can. If they decide to navigate the court systems they can get free assistance in navigating that and I've talked myself into a place where I don't remember your exact question. I think it was just about how it impacts the community but when an organization like ours or other mental health organizations come out and they say, "hey we're gonna help you figure that out," it takes a lot of that pressure off. I think of okay I've experienced this thing and I have to navigate this big huge system or this big huge world that I don't know much about. It can feel very daunting and one in four women and one in six men have been impacted by sexual violence. So it's not a small issue. It's something that happens to a lot of people. We're humbled and honored to get to walk beside folks in their journey.

Julie (9:50- 11:25): I'll jump in. I think about hearing Jamie talk about the organization that he works with and some of the common threads that our students and teaching fellows experience with Breakthrough, in a word, that comes to mind loud and clear is voice. Well, actually, two

words or concepts: *voice and advocacy*. I think about the importance that nonprofits often create a space for individuals to feel safe enough to have a voice and to self-advocate. For students listening and watching today, I sure hope that you have all sorts of experiences in your school and your families where you're brave and bold and able to have a voice and speak your mind and stand up for yourself. Fundamentally, I think Breakthrough is an educating organization but we create space for students who may be underrepresented to have a voice and to be brave and follow their goals and confidence. I think those life skills for some folks in our community and our neighbors who don't always have places they feel safe for organizations like ours to create that. I think it's really unique and special.

Allison (11:250-12:55): I'll add that as well, kind of rolling off what both Jamie and Julie have said, beautiful things. I think about Magnified Giving is that we are encouraging people to stand up and advocate and positively communicate with one another. That is definitely a life skill. And when we watch the news today we see some of the things that are happening in the world are not necessarily positively communicating and listening and those are important in your life and developing your community to collaborate with others as you move into your adult world, "adulting". Where being able to positively express yourself and advocate for yourself and listen are such important skill lessons that we need to start working on those younger. So I think organizations like Jamie's and Julie's, Magnify Giving and other organizations that are out there and are encouraging that type of communication skill building is so vital for our youth.

Caroline (12:55- 14:35): I would absolutely agree and I think when it comes down to how Magnified Giving's work is impactful for the community it comes down to how are the students that learn about all of the nonprofits that exist in our community, and what does that mean for them? As an educator I think that I define life skill as anytime you learn something and you apply that, and that's true learning. When you can apply that skill, that knowledge. I think that in Magnified Giving the students that participate in it and especially the nonprofits that participate, it is impactful because all of these people are coming together and working together towards a common goal. We all work every day in different ways to make our communities a better and stronger place, and that's really what everyone here is doing today. So it's a wonderful thing when you see students that are reaching out and finding a nonprofit that is working in an area that they are passionate about. Jamie actually came into my classroom when I was a teacher, and not only shared his mission but also shared it in a way that students could understand. And my students, after Jamie left, said (among other things) what an amazing storyteller! Then they saw a little bit of themselves in Jamie. Then, well I could do this, I could do this, they saw more opportunities. There are so many benefits of being a member of a community like this.

Lindsey (14:35-15:00): Thank you, the next thing I'd like to ask is, Caroline just kind of touched on this a little bit, from her education experience but **how are your organizations able to collaborate within the community to achieve your missions and maybe that's among each other but also how are you able to collaborate with other organizations to achieve your missions?**

Julie (15:00-16:39): I can go ahead on this. When I considered this question I think the chief collaborators that Breakthrough are the students and families that participate in the experience. I already talked about talked a little bit about voice and and we really put that at the center of the work that we do so our students and families really help co-create the program which I think creates a lot of meaning for them outside of that we collaborate with colleges and universities to identify young adults who are interested in service or teaching experiences. We hire 60 people probably just like you if you're in high school and if you're in middle school we have volunteer opportunities too but we collaborate with colleges and universities to identify our great staff and then elementary and middle school schools to identify students who participate in the program. I would say our collaborations we just do an awful lot of question, asking and employing curiosity to understand where we can help. We're not trying to do something that somebody else is doing or that isn't necessary um you know we want to be relevant and I think that involves having an open ear and doing a lot of listening to our students families and our typically educational partners that we work with.

Jamie (16:39-18:30): I think when I think about collaboration, and julie you mentioned colleges, you know we're hosting an event or co-hosting an event with NKU tomorrow night, a virtual event, but we do that as well. You probably hear my dog in the background speaking, I'm sorry. We collaborate with colleges and places like that to do storytelling events um we've done those before with local businesses and things but we've also you know one of our whole things is being present in locations where you wouldn't normally find an organization like ours. We've set up at comic conventions and so it's this way of finding people. We want to be where people are. We also collaborate a lot with musicians and within music spaces you know we want to go reach out to where people are. If people are at a concert or festival and there's somebody reaching out to them about an experience that they have had or that people the people that they know have had and nobody has ever reached out to them about before we've had some really impactful stories and really impactful moments that have come from those. For us we of course love collaborating on different things with places like Women's Crisis Center, Women Helping Women, like other organizations locally who are doing really great work for sexual assault survivors. For us a lot of times it is collaborating with for-profits or with places where you may not normally find any kind of social services or non-profit just because that's a lot of times where people are going and we're able to reach folks that way. So that's kind of what I think of when I think [about] collaboration.

Caroline (18:30-20:33): I think that what Magnifying Giving does is foster that collaborative spirit and show students that that's what's happening in the nonprofit world. It most certainly happens in the for-profit world but a lot of times we think of like: Pepsi or Coke. Like, pick a side. Who are you for you know and in the nonprofit world, when the nonprofit world is working well it's just not like that. It's we are a team and our competitor is the social cause so it is how we can improve hunger in our cities. We don't want hunger in our cities, we have too much hunger. So all these organizations are working in so many different ways to fight that against that cause you know because we would love it if it didn't happen or if it was so unheard of and so all these non-profits it's in their best interest to collaborate with one another. Because we can tackle it, we can tackle it from a couple different issues, we can tackle it from a couple different sides, we can

see the benefits of recognizing the good in one another, and working together towards solving an issue. So when it comes to life skills and when it comes to Magnified Giving our goals are so broad um as an organization because we would love for you to dive into financial literacy, into career in nonprofits, into general leadership development there are so many different ways as an organization that we collaborate to try to ensure that you get the most out of the program. So the specific answer for Magnified Giving is that we collaborate a lot with a lot of different organizations through you students. It is up to you to reach out to new organizations and get them registered on our website but it also is as a non-profit point of view really um in our best interest always to collaborate with one another.

Alison (20:33-22:12): I think the only thing that I would add quickly because I think all three of our other panelists answered the question beautifully. One of the things that I think is so amazing Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky have such a strong collaborative spirit that we're really fortunate to live in the community that we do because we are here and we want to support one another. So hopefully our students that are participating did Magnified Giving or just getting out there and volunteering and giving their time and their talents to an organization hopefully they are able to see that and feel that collaborative spirit. Specifically related to Magnified Giving is one of the key things that that's an added benefit to the program is that students are collaborating with one another which again as we mentioned is a life skill that is invaluable and will help you carry through whether it's through your next educational experience or when you begin working in a profession being able to collaborate with one another is going to help you in ways that you can't even begin to imagine. So that's something that is really important and again we're just very fortunate to live in a community that is so collaborative for one another.

Lindsey (22:12-24:06): Thanks, everyone. It like I feel like what I'm hearing about all of your organizations is that each of your organizations has a deep impact on individuals but I love that there's like a chain reaction component to that when you think about the students who are impacted through Breakthrough Cincinnati who go and you know become leaders and then impact a ton of people through their leadership or or have families that are successful and who like it just starts this awesome chain reaction of success. People using their voices. Similarly in Magnified Giving students are empowered and have these opportunities to use these different skills to learn collaboration and public speaking and advocacy and then they go use that to positively impact their community. Same thing with A Voice for the Innocent, people are deeply impacted as they learn to tell their stories and as they heal and I'm sure that they're able then to do that same thing for other people and impact the other people who are around them and just grow in their skills of empathy. Being a good supporter for people. I love that I'm hearing like people are deeply impacted through these programs but there's a chain reaction that happens as those people you know use those skills to make waves in the community. I think that's just kind of a ripple that I'm seeing throughout all of your organizations. The last thing that I want to ask is **speaking directly to the students who are listening if this is resonating with them if they're interested in getting involved in this kind of organization or getting behind a mission that that improves quality of life, what advice would you give to those students who are interested how can they get behind these missions?**

Julie (24:06- 26:35): I can go. As we have this conversation that's striking me just how universal this conversation is and the sense of people having support systems and places to go where they gain strength and connection and skills to help [them] thrive. We all know this is a particularly challenging time, we feel isolation and disconnection and all of that. The students served by Breakthrough Cincinnati are disproportionately experiencing the effects of the pandemic. These are households in poverty, students who are already experiencing learning loss because they don't have access to the same potentially the same resources that you do. So ways to get involved with Breakthrough, as I mentioned before, we have volunteer opportunities. But if you are an older high school student or later when you enter college we hire four summer positions young adults just like you to come and serve and work in a mentoring capacity with students who benefit so tremendously from you someone who's had a similar or even a totally different path through school and life than they have to serve in a mentoring capacity. So very specifically Breakthrough does great work with students to help them get to college if that's something that resonates with you, I'd love to hear from you. More broadly, keep connected to Magnified Giving because the experiences that you're having learning about social causes, social justice and needs in our community will help you be a more engaged and humane citizen of the world to understand the lived experience from others is something that I hope you keep with you always so keep learning keep being curious and you know just plug in somewhere that that matters to you that's what matters there isn't a right one, the right one for you. So thanks everybody!

Jamie (26:35-28:40): I can um jump in, I think that for us we welcome volunteers on our official volunteer team um starting at age 16. I know that and in other agencies that you know like Women's Crisis Center and things like that, typically have to be 18 but that doesn't mean there aren't ways to be involved. At Women's Crisis Center, I also work there, and we have a big presence in high school. So if you're watching this and we and there is no presence from a local agency in your high school you know you can reach out to them and say, "what can we do here? I really care about this cause I want to educate classmates. I want to make sure they know about resources." And that's kind of the same thing with A Voice for the Innocent too, if you're wanting to volunteer with us maybe you're not 16 or maybe you're not sure about the official volunteer team, email us we'll we'll find stuff to do. That's the thing about nonprofits is they thrive on every one of them that I know of thrives on volunteers and thrives on having people saying, "hey I care about this, and I want to help." Just like Julie said there's not a wrong one or a wrong way to be involved. If it's not clear, reach out and they're probably going to have three or four projects ready for you. Oh you know what we needed someone to come and do this. Or we needed somebody to enter this data. Or we needed somebody to help. They're probably gonna have answers for you right away, and from there you're likely to learn more about that world of work that you didn't even know you're gonna learn about. Other agencies doing similar work and work in a similar field. I think just ask. Just check in and say, "hey I love your organization. How can I help?" and go from there.

Alison (28:40-30:50): I would also add that through the Magnified Giving website there are so many nonprofit agencies that are registered with us that have identified their mission to fall

under a Life Skill so as we mentioned in Lindsey your explanation of what a life skill means it is not what we would generally think of on the surface of being able to cook and clean and know how to care for ourselves and things like that but it goes so much deeper to coping skills, leadership skills, personal development, taking care of your mental health in a positive way, in supporting individuals as A Voice for the Innocent does and Breakthrough Cincinnati. There's just so many opportunities out there to support individuals' life skills. If it's someone with special needs and they're learning to develop themselves so that they can potentially live on their own someday, if that's something that is a passion for you [you can find an organization that serves that specific cause]. Again, to mirror the other two comments there is no right or wrong answer it is really what drives you and what sparks your passions so I do encourage you to do your research and look into other non-profits but it's developing your personal life skills when you get out there and you try and put yourself in a situation that maybe it's taking you out of your little comfort zone but checking into other organizations and maybe see if you can volunteer. Maybe that's not the one for you but you've tried at least and that is personal growth as well so just checking things out and doing your research and putting yourself out there is great personal development which is certainly a life skill to get out of our comfort zone for sure.

Caroline (30:50-32:19): I'm going to massively echo Allison because we're definitely on the same page on this but yes I think my one of my favorite quotes is, "education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." I think, go out there and find your spark and it will lead you to more learn about something that interests you, volunteer for an organization that interests you and maybe it will work out, and it will lead to the next thing and the next thing and the next thing. And maybe it will lead you to the conclusion that maybe that's not what I wanted it to be, or maybe it's that's not what the direction that I wanted to go in and that it's a really valuable thing as well. So do what you can, while you can. When I was in high school I participated in in the magnify giving program and it was really valuable for me mostly in the way that I ended up going to an organization that changed my life and what I did for them is I cleaned hallways, for a housing organization and it was that's exactly what I can do. I can wake up on Saturday morning and spend five hours cleaning hallways and that's totally something in my skill set. It didn't teach me how to clean, but I'm really good at sweeping...I'll put it out there. I have ten thousand hours [of sweeping] but, I think, that just trying something new and knowing that you were placed in the community [as a part of that change]. Go try something or try something new.

Lindsey (32:19-32:49): Awesome, good stuff, well I want to thank Julie, Caroline, Jamie, and Allison for joining us today. Students thank you so much for watching. I hope you learned something I hope you're enjoying these cause panels. Panelists thank you so much for sharing your insight and wisdom and students have a great day!