

Lasting Memories

SPIRITAN MISSION INSPIRES GRADUATE

Alex Brennsteiner, HS'12, recently returned to campus to speak to students, faculty and staff during Heritage Week—a celebration of the Spiritan charism and the University's founding.

Brennsteiner, a graduate of the health management systems program, spoke about how the Spiritan charism influenced his education at Duquesne and is inspiring his work in the health care field.

His talk was inspired by the Spiritan aphorism, "More by deed than word," and anchored by three key points: practical union, solidarity and community, and selflessness.

"Practical union is about addressing true need," explains Brennsteiner, director of oncology quality and safety for Allegheny Health Network (AHN), and a member of the leadership team of AHN's Healthcare@Home program, which provides home and community-based care, including home health, hospice, palliative care or home infusion therapy, and home medical equipment. "I remember being asked by Father Jim McCloskey (Duquesne's former vice president for Mission and Identity) to imagine being at evening prayer when someone shows up at the pearly in need of help. Christ is at the door and you are being called to connect."

Brennsteiner says his cross-cultural mission experience while at Duquesne taught him the importance of solidarity and community, and while volunteering in Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood as a student, he drew on Spiritan studies and remembered that the Congregation's founder, Claude Poullart des Places, didn't start to build his ministry until he "crossed the street."

This idea of unifying and empathizing with others by working in close, physical proximity trickles down into his job, where he says he is often reminded to "stop and put the person on the receiving end into focus," just as he did as a student volunteer.

Selflessness was taught by his parents, who made sure "how you treat other people" was a topic of frequent discussion at home. At Duquesne, Spiritan teachings reinforced this lesson and Brennsteiner was constantly impressed by the presence of Spiritans on campus who always put others' needs first. Brennsteiner tries to incorporate this approach into his work.

"Our team works every day to keep the patient at the center of everything that we do. The transition from hospital to home historically left patients at risk to fall through the cracks, and the Healthcare@Home model is seeking to meet people where they are and where they have need—in their homes and communities. It's really very Spiritan," he says.

Luci-Jo DiMaggio, S'98, GS'99, GA'05, Duquesne's director of mission animation, attended Brennsteiner's talk.

"Alex speaks passionately about how his education at Duquesne and how its Spiritan roots influence the way he lives his life," she says. "He truly understands the importance of being fully present to the other, being open to the Spirit working in our lives, and being aware always of those on the margins. He beautifully weaves these into the way he approaches both his personal and his professional life as a health system administrator, and is an amazing example of how our alumni live out our Catholic, Spiritan values every day." ♦



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- 1. practical union**
- 2. solidarity and community**
- 3. selflessness**