

Molly: Hi everyone and welcome back to All Careers Considered at the Walter Center podcast. Today I'm here with Kathleen Burnett, an IU alum and DC based entrepreneur and today we're going to dive into her experience at IU and after graduation how her skills and interests really led her to where she is today, so thanks for being here Kathleen!

Kathleen: Oh thank you!

M: So Kathleen, I know you graduated from IU Bloomington in 2013. but i'd love to know a little bit more about you maybe where you're from originally and what you were involved in as a student at IU.

K: I grew up in Avon west side of Indianapolis and while at IU I got really involved in the residence halls for a while. I also spent a year studying abroad. I didn't do an IU program but absolutely got a ton of support from the IU study abroad office and that really shaped a lot of what I did and yeah I kind of dabbled in a few other things but those are the main things I can remember.

M: Yeah that's awesome! I was reading a little bit more about you on your website (your app website) and I saw that when you were younger you actually traveled abroad in Europe with your girl scout troop and that was one reason that helped you kind of choose your your major at IU, so i'd like to hear a little bit more about that, what that experience was like.

K: Yeah and you know, um, when I was younger my dream was to work in art museums and museums in general really and going abroad being able to go to places like the British museum and the Victorian Albert museum in London just really convinced me that I was on the right path with that and you know, any doubts I had that history might not be the best thing to major in, just this is what I love this is what I want to focus on right now.

M: Very cool. So did you have any doubts about it because you said you're like "I'm not really sure if it was what I wanted to do" but it was just those experiences that really solidified it for you but did you have any doubts about it?

K: Uh, I wouldn't say I had outward or really inner doubts but you know how it is when you say you want to see something like history and you get all the classic lines about not being able to find a job or in my case everyone asked me if I wanted to be a teacher. "You like history, you must want to be a history teacher". No, there's other things out there and I think that if there were any doubts I had it was directed at kind of counteracting that idea that the only thing I could do was to be a teacher.

M: Sure yeah, that's such a great point and that's what we tell you know our liberal arts students is that you should major in what you're really interested in and what you are just so curious about and that will lead to really interesting opportunities, so I'm really glad you mentioned that.

So tell me a little bit about, you know, you're getting ready to graduate from IU with your history degree and tell me about what that experience was like.

K: Yeah well I knew that ultimately I wanted to end up in Washington DC, I had visited a friend here and just loved the city, I wasn't sure at that point in time I had gotten involved into politics at the same time and it had always been an interest of mine and I wasn't sure if I was going to go down that route or stick with museums but I knew this was a city where I could do kind of both so I spent a summer I actually helped out with a campaign in Colorado for the summer while i was applying to several different jobs and then as luck would have it the first job I got was with a polling company here in Washington which I was totally happy with and one of the things I love about this city is that it's allowed me to still be involved in history in many different ways no matter what I'm doing in my nine-to-five job, that love is still very much there.

M: yeah that's really cool um so it sounds like you you know you had this great experience in colorado and then you moved to dc so i'm curious to hear a little bit about what that transition for you was like you know having these experiences in politics and museums and obviously now you founded an app. So tell me a little bit about your app and kind of what inspired you to make that idea a reality.

K: Well, it really got started when I was waiting on the metro one morning and overheard a teacher yelling at a group of 30 odd students that they all needed to get off in two stops and I just thought to myself it would be so nice if they could just easily send that information to everyone in the group and I kind of extrapolated from there and thought about all the different community organizing events I had done in my past all the non-profits I had been involved in and really seeing the need to have that kind of one-to-many communication make sure people know their schedule, know where to be, that these are all things that can be a challenge when you're trying to get a large group of people together and the more I thought about it, the more the idea really spoke to me on this deep personal level. To be able to get people together, to be curious and go explore the world or feel like they can be involved in their community and do things like go on legislative door knocks, all of these things to be able to in some way help with them is... just it still blows my mind every day that I could be so lucky.

M: That's really cool. It sounds like a great idea and it sounds like you had the idea you saw the need and you had some great skills and experiences to help you get off the ground. So what did you do next when you had that idea and you saw that need? Where did you go to, because I feel like there's probably a lot of students who have an idea for an app or you know any type of you know interesting new products but just figuring out how to get it started is maybe something they need help with.

K: Yeah and there's a lot of great resources out there one of the most important things you can do is just talk to people about it. It's very easy to say "oh i have this great idea and i can't tell anyone because they'll steal it" but most people to be honest lack the kind of get up and go to really do something with it and you need their feedback and that's how you can hone your idea

and that's how you can make many different contacts and start moving along and then you really discover the technical resources or the financial resources and all of these things that you need going forward.

M: Yeah that's a really great point. Just kind of being able to talk about it with people and just kind of get it out there. So I'm curious to hear how it's going now and if you have any, you know goals for it or where you're going to see your company going.

K: Yeah well it's been a tough couple months since this is something designed for getting people together and that's just not happening right now. I had just launched the beta version of it for testing early this year when things started shutting down but I've kind of regrouped and figured out that a lot of what I'm doing lends itself well to the kinds of events that will start happening eventually there's a lot of things I can add on to it to make it more appropriate in this post covered world and so I'm just working on getting info about it out there, writing a blog and also at the same time I'm registered as a public benefit corporation and I'm jumping into that side of things a bit and trying to find ways I can help other community organizations at this time when it comes to especially their technology, making sure that they feel like their website represents who they are or figuring out the best use of Facebook groups for them things like that because that's part of my company bylaws is to help other organizations in any way I can.

M: That's really cool! Awesome, thank you so much for sharing. I'm really interested and I feel like if I'm ever in DC with a group, you know, sometimes we take groups of students to new cities, it sounds like it'd be a great resource. Yeah so it sounds like you know you've had this awesome career and you've really been able to turn your love of history and empowering people into this really unique opportunity and I'd be curious if you have any, you know, words of advice for students who maybe they have a liberal arts degree and they have a lot of passions but are just trying to figure out how to really take their passion about democracy and empowering people and turning it into a career. What would you say to those students?

K: I think the best thing you can do is just get involved whether it's internships, whether it's volunteering with different campaigns, that's the only way to really get in there and explore these different options, explore what's out there. Just do what you can. I recognize that sometimes there are financial challenges with these things. That's something that I personally feel very strongly about but do what you can and never be afraid to talk to people, ask them for coffee, just put yourself out there, find out what there is and above all else keep doing what you're doing. It doesn't always feel good to be involved in these areas, it can be a real struggle sometimes but that doesn't mean you're not on the right path and making progress both in your career and for society.

M: Awesome I think that's great advice thank you so much for being here today Kathleen. It was great learning more about your story.

K: Oh no, thank you this was great. I, you know, I really enjoyed my time at IU, I took so much from it and I appreciate being able to maybe give a little back.

M: Yeah that's awesome and for any students or you know young professionals that are listening to this podcast right now feel free to reach out to Kathleen um I think I believe you're on the Walter Center Success Network which is our kind of online networking tool, so students feel free to reach out to her with any questions, about entrepreneurship, about moving to DC or about you know living abroad I did that for a while too. Perfect awesome, well thank you so much for joining us and thanks to everyone for listening to another episode of All Careers Considered and we'll see you next time, thanks!