



an unselfish Desire

“There were not things that could necessarily be noticed by everyone, but knowing what kind of transformations that the children had and knowing they had a part in their change was really the best part.”

— Luke Karner, Knox '09

Success can often be a complicated and confusing word. Many people opt to measure personal success with the traditional benchmarks society has today deemed “norms.” For a businessman, this may be the car he drives. For a student, this probably refers to a five-letter grading scale that can be a friend or foe come semester’s end.

But what about the people who choose to measure success on a far less tangible scale? What if success was measured by the number of times a person laughs in a day or the amount of determination put into a task. For some, it is. For Luke Karner, Knox '09, success was a product of realizing patience, compassion and optimism, through a rare opportunity.

Karner spent his summer volunteering at a New Hampshire summer program called “Wediko.” Wediko, by appearances, is like any other summer camp; however, it has an extensive staff of social workers, psychiatrists and other professionals with expertise in behavior disorders. Wediko is a therapeutic program. The children participating have been diagnosed with serious emotional and behavioral disorders ranging from aspergers and bipolar, to such environmental issues as post traumatic stress and serious aggression. The program groups children by development and academic ability, which allowed Karner to teach and experience a wide range of personalities and ages.

He averaged 16 hours per day, seven days a week for two months. “Every activity and part of the day is planned out and very predictable as many of the children lack that kind of stability in their lives at home,” Karner said. Although draining at times,

Karner reinforced the idea that being “successful” was not necessarily about achieving a tangible set of ideals each day.

Many of the children Karner interacted with were violent and abusive with both their words and bodies. “The whole idea is that these children are not really angry at you, but really do not have the social skills to deal with their emotions effectively,” Karner said. Once having a better understanding of this, Karner approached each day with a new sense of enthusiasm and a different idea of what “success” would entail.

Every day, he began to see improvements in the children and noticed that victories were happening everywhere he turned. Students who would leave class in a “fit of rage” were eventually completing assignments and participating in activities. Determination and desire had become a key factor in how these children were approaching each day, much like Karner himself.

Karner possesses a blind faith in not only these children, but himself as well. He has an unyielding trust in the value of persistent patience and the ability to see the “big picture.” He believes in these children and knows he can have a positive effect on each of their lives. He adopted a sense of humor for his sanity and a veil of optimism for his motivation. It is these inspiring qualities that Karner developed that have made him a successful man. — A. Hammel

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