

Something Extra EP 112 - Kyle McClellan

Lisa Nichols: Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins, are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes, but each year in the United States, about 6,000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

My name is Lisa Nichols, and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of Technology Partners and as a mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side as she impacts everyone she meets. Through these two important roles as CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are.

Join me as I explore this something extra in leaders from all walks of life, and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities, and in themselves.

Lisa: I am thrilled to have Kyle McClellan on the show today. Kyle is a former pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals and is the founder and president of Brace for IMPACT 46. Kyle, thank you so much for being on the show today. I am so excited about our conversation. You and I have had a chance to visit, and there's just so many awesome things that you're doing right now that I want our listeners to hear about, so thank you for being here.

Kyle McClellan: No problem. Thanks for having me.

Lisa: Well, let's just jump right into it. I think people know you as a Cardinals pitcher, and then I think you went to the Texas Rangers for a while. I want to talk about that, but let's back up a little bit because people may not know how you grew up.

I know you're a St. Louisan through and through, right? Talk to us a little bit about how you grew up.

Kyle: I grew up right here in St. Louis. I grew up in Hazelwood then I went to Hazelwood West High School, the big question. Grew up in a great family, had great parents, great brother and sister; had one each. I grew up playing ball. That's what we did in our family. If it wasn't me, it was my brother or sister at a game, and I was the batboy or running around. Sports is always a huge part of my life. It was something that I really started to excel at in that junior high/high school timeframe. Had a chance to get a scholarship at the University of Missouri, my senior year, and then shortly after that started getting attention from professional teams. I was 17 years old and just finished high school, and then was drafted by the Cardinals. My parents and I had to make that decision of as a 17-year-old kid, do you go to college? Do you go and sign professionally? Ultimately, we decided that we thought the best path was to sign with the Cardinals for development reasons, and off I was. I was 18 at that time, by the time I signed, and off into the real world with expectation and all the things that go with it.

Lisa: I know that I've read a little bit about you, and you were a three-sport athlete, right?

Kyle: Yes.

Lisa: You played basketball and baseball and what else?

Kyle: Football.

Lisa: Football. Anything with a ball in it? [laughs]

Kyle: I have two kids now. I have a nine and seven-year-old. To that point, youth sports is so different now than it was, and honestly, I hate where it is. Every sport is so obsessive with year-round. Soccer's year-round, baseball's year-round. The coaches in sports, they don't want their players playing other sports because they feel like they're going to be behind in their training, and it's a struggle.

My wife and I talk about it all the time. How do we balance this and the family life and sports? If you commit to a team you want to be there for them, but man, it's out of hand.

We're thinking it right now with my daughter who does select softball, select soccer, club soccer, and then also plays feeder basketball. It's a competition for her time all the time and it's really a struggle. When I was growing up it was you played football during the fall, and then when that was over you put your ball and your spikes away until the next fall, and then you played basketball. Then when that was over you got the baseball spikes out. Now it's different. It's tough being in the parents' situation, knowing better, but knowing also that that's just the way things are right now, and it's a struggle to find that balance for sure.

It's unfortunate for the kids because they're making them have to pick early. Like I said, I was a three-sport athlete, able to do that all the way through high school. I ended up just doing baseball my senior year, but kids aren't going to be able to do that. They're going to have to pick at the age of 9, 10 what they want to do, and unfortunately, you don't know at that point what you are good at.

Lisa: Yes, and you don't even know really which one you're going to enjoy the most.

Kyle: Each sport develops so many skill sets. Basketball taught me so many things that baseball would have never taught me. Football taught me so many things that basketball and baseball would have never taught me. Baseball I was always good at. Basketball and football I had to work my butt off to compete and to be a good player. I learned so much through all those other sports, and that's why I want my kids playing multiple sports, but it's definitely a lot tougher now than it was 20 years ago.

Lisa: Yes. It's tough on many fronts right now. I know you have your nine-year-old little girl, Olivia, and then your almost seven-year-old. Let's talk a little bit about your Cardinals' experience. I know that was just an amazing experience for you. You were drafted-- it was 2002?

Kyle: Drafted in 2002, and then I spent six years in the minor leagues. Two of those were in rehab with two elbow surgeries. I had a lot of ups and downs in the minor leagues. It's a tough road, especially as a high school kid. If you look at the percentages of the guys in the major leagues, high school versus college, I don't know the number but I would tell you it's overwhelmingly college players over high school.

Then if you take out the high school players that are the first pick of that draft, I would say that percentage drops even more to so many more college kids. There are just so many things that can happen, and so much development that does need to happen, that it's a tough road for high school kids. I had an injury and sat out for two years, and when I came back, I just matured mentally, understood the opportunity I had in front of me. When I came back, I had a very short window coming off the injury before they release you. I just happened to make the most of it and fell into the right situation and did well.

The next year I found myself in the major leagues coming out of spring training and spent five years. I never went back down to the minor leagues. I was up for five straight years, was a part of the 2011 World Series team. It was just great memories. To be able to play here in my hometown in front of my friends and family all the time was great. I would say it has its negatives too because if you had a bad game, everybody was watching. If I was in San Diego or Seattle and had a bad game nobody would know, but here you have a bad game and I still hear about it. Like, "I remember that game you threw." I'm like, "I threw some good ones too in there," but they don't miss anything here.

That has its pluses and its negatives to it, but it was as good as if you could have asked for an experience for my family here, for my wife. The city has just been so great to us through our whole career, and even now post-career. Just supported us all the way through. Got to be a part of some amazing teams and meet some people that really had some huge influences in my life as well, so I think I was placed in that situation for a reason.

Lisa: Absolutely. To be able to play for your home team, that is a dream come true, but I also know, Kyle, that you developed some amazing friendships.

One of those was with Adam Wainwright. I really want to dive into this because there's so much that I want to talk about here, but you ended up retiring, you retired in 2014, and then that very same year, you and Bridget took a trip with the Wainwrights to Haiti. That trip was a pivot point for you to set you up for what you're doing now. Tell us about that trip and what even inspired you to go.

Kyle: You kind of need to rewind. When I was playing here, Bridget and I were looking for an opportunity to get involved financially in something and we couldn't find it. We looked for three years and we couldn't find our right fit. In the meantime, we had put money aside in a giving account that we were just waiting to use. I continued to go down some roads and doors were getting closed. Adam was a great friend of mine, a mentor of mine, a tremendous leader, and had a huge influence on my life, and I would say on my wife's life as well, between him and Jenny as a great team to us.

I reached out to him and I said, "Adam, you're doing some amazing things all over the world. What are some things that we can get involved in?" He mentioned some things and it just wasn't for me. He was, "I'm very type A, I'm very hands-on." I didn't want to just put my name on something and have somebody else just take it and run with it. I wanted to be involved in it. Thankfully, we didn't have anything from a family standpoint that really grabbed our heart, or really we were able to get behind, as a lot of people are drawn into things because of a family situation. We were just like, "Man, what is it that we need to do?"

Three years went by. I'm with the Texas Rangers. I call Adam at the end of that year. I'd just had surgery on my shoulder, so injuries is what led to the early retirement. I was 28 years old, I had six arm surgeries, and I just came off a tough year with the Rangers where I spent time in the minor leagues. I had a surgery, I knew I had a long road ahead of me, and I called Adam and I said, "Adam, the Parable of Talents is just weighing on me right now. We've essentially buried our treasure. We have put this money in a giving account, and nobody is growing in their faith because of our finances. We have to get rid of this money."

He mentioned some things and he said, "I tell you what, we're going to Haiti in three weeks.

Why don't you go with us?" I was like, "I'm in. I've always wanted to do something like this. To be honest with you, I always used baseball as a crutch not to go because I was preparing for spring training. I can't be in a third-world country. What if I get sick, would I throw that day? I can't lift that day. I'm going to be behind." A lot of that's true, but it's also a crutch to not go and put yourself in that situation.

My wife, I talked to her about it. The next thing we know, three weeks later we were on a plane to Haiti. I'll be honest, I didn't know the first thing about Haiti. I just knew we were going with some friends of ours to see some stuff that they had been involved with. Adam's financial advisor is a Christian financial advisor, and he says, "Look, you're going to write the check because that's needed, but you're going to follow that check as well because that's what's going to change you."

We're not just going to write checks to places and never go see it because seeing it is what truly changes us. We have a responsibility of our finances to make sure that those funds you're giving should be looked at just like a business. If you run a business, you want the most return for the kingdom as you can on those finances, and you're responsible for that. We were on that trip to see if the money that they had put into this children's home was something they wanted to continue to invest in, or if it just wasn't quite what they were hoping, and move on to something else.

We got down there, and Bridget and I didn't know in that three years. I couldn't tell you what we were looking for. I couldn't tell you the project we wanted or what it looked like, but when we saw it we knew it. When we got down there we were like, "This is where we need to be." A lot of things were there. We didn't really know, but as we started going we were like, "This is what we were holding out for." We have a leadership team in place. I don't want to do the day-to-day grind of making all the decisions. We already had people in place for that.

What they needed was they needed funding, and what our strength was was funding. That was where we said, "We have some funding in place, but let's create this organization and make this thing last longer."

The funny part and the ironic part about this trip is that purposely-- I'll be dead honest. I didn't want to do international. I wanted to be in St. Louis. I'm born in St. Louis, I'm raised in St. Louis. St. Louis supported me throughout my entire career, and I wanted to support St. Louis back through that. International wasn't where I thought that we would end up.

What I quickly learned was that there was some selfish intent into that that maybe I didn't know at the time, but I think deep down inside there were some selfish desires of like, "This is going to build my name in the community." There's some selfish stuff to it. What I also realized is how big the kingdom is on that trip in Haiti. What I realized is God loves those kids in Haiti just as much as he loves my kids, and that changed my life.

Before that, I would tell you that my kids were more important. The people in my bubble, the people in my city, my interaction, they're more important, but God doesn't see it that way. God sees it as, "I don't see city and county and state and country lines. I see everybody as one, and they're my people." That was a perspective I didn't have until we got out of our comfort zone, went over there, and it completely changed our life and the trajectory of my wife and I's relationship, our faith, and our organization that was created after that because our eyes were open to so much more.

More so, what I also saw over time was that we had the heart and we had the passion, but we didn't have the training. What God was saying is, "I love your heart. You're going to do some great things but you're not ready. If you come to St. Louis and start here you're going to fail," because my mindset would have been, "This is what you're doing, this is how you're going to do it, and this is what it looks like." What we learned in Haiti is the value of local leadership, and how to play your role and not come in and say, "This is what's going to happen," because you don't know.

I tell all the time, "Everybody listen to this. We can all jump on a plane and head to Haiti right now, and you can all give me ideas of what you think need to be done, and they will all be good ideas-

Lisa: This is why it's going to be done.

Kyle: -but they wouldn't be right because we don't live there. We don't live it every day, we don't know what happens in those communities, and so you need to have that local leadership and trust." That's what was found in Haiti, and that's why I think we've been so successful.

Lisa: I love it. I know you've got stories, and I want to jump into those, Kyle, but we're going to take a quick break and then we'll be right back with Kyle.

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Lisa: Kyle, in 2014 you founded your 501(c)(3), Brace for IMPACT. Tell me, where did that name come from?

Kyle: When we were going through this and trying to figure out if we were going to start an organization, I kept thinking about our trip. Anybody that goes on a mission trip for the first time, you think you're going to go down and change the world. You're going to change the country, you're going to do all this good. We went down there to have an impact on the kids. What we learned is we weren't braced for the impact that it was going to have on us.

By being down there and getting out of our bubble, exposing ourselves, and putting ourselves in situations that we were uncomfortable in, it really gave us a chance to see things differently. We weren't braced for that and it wrecked our world. The 46 was my uniform number, and we had to put that on because when Sully landed the plane in the Hudson, he said "Brace for impact" before he landed, and he wrote a book called *Brace for Impact*. So I don't get sued by Sully, we had to put my uniform number on the end of it, and that's how we came up with the name.

Lisa: Okay, so you founded your 501(c)(3). What was the first thing you did when you went to Haiti? Talk about the orphanage, and then we'll move into some other things.

Kyle: The first thing we did is we asked what's needed, what's next, and our leadership team down there-- These are six kids that grew up in an orphanage together, that our partner over 30 years ago went down and met on his first trip. The leader, Remy, who's our head visionary, he grabbed Brad and pulled him aside and said, "30 years ago. God's given me a vision to do what people have done for us, and I think you're here to help." Over time, Brad continued to go down there and build relationships.

When I talk about jumping in and plugging into a leadership team, these are people that are trusted. Brad has known these kids since they were waist-high in an orphanage. These are essentially his kids. His relationship with them is so great, and they're our leadership team. They now sit on the board. All of the things that we've done down there is done under their name and their entity, so it's there's. This is a Haitian-led community project.

We sat down with them and they said, "We need to expand our children's home. We have 32 kids, we would like to expand it," and so that was what we did. We came back, I ran a half marathon, and we tried to raise money. It took us 19 months but we raised \$212,750 to do it. That was our first step, was we built the second level of the orphanage. Originally my thought was we were going to do this here and then we were going to go to Honduras, Africa, Guatemala, and all these impoverished countries, and we were going to change the world. I was sitting on the balcony with my wife on one of our trips after the orphanage had been built, and I looked at her and said, "We can't leave here." She said, "Oh God no, we can't leave here." What I learned was, it's not just building the building, but it's doing it and then surrounding them with the resources they need to be successful. If we did that and left, we would really be creating a big void and a burden on that community to be able to continue the funding of that. We committed, essentially for as long as we could see in the future, to the funding of whatever was needed at that orphanage to take care of those kids as an organization.

Then it just grew from there. Our partners stepped up as well. Adam and Jenny got excited after that trip and caught the vision. I knew that we were in great hands there. We've built a school together as a group. We have 300 kids from the community that get to go to our school now.

We have a feeding program that Brace for IMPACT started. We feed the kids every day a hot nutritious meal that we hire women to cook there from the community. Then on weekends, we lose contact with the kids, and we're finding out through a survey that on Mondays was their worst day. We found out that they weren't eating on the weekends.

We give them backpack meals that we pack here in St. Louis as a part of a volunteer program we do. We ship the meals down there, and then on weekends, each kid gets two backpack meals to take home so that they can be fed and energized and their brains and bodies can develop and be ready to take in that education on Monday. We have a hospital that a kid that grew up in our orphanage, our original orphanage that's about 20 minutes away from ours now, where all this stemmed from. Brilliant mind, wanted to be a doctor, and went to medical school seven years in Port-au-Prince and became a doctor.

Adam and Jenny have built this hospital that sees over a thousand people a month. There's a ton of jobs created from the nurses and doctors and everybody that's associated with it. All hired are all Haitians. We do take little strike teams. I call them on the medical side to help empower and educate the team, but we don't get in the way of seeing patients and telling them what to do. We just try to help train and educate. Do seminars specific to the things that they need. We really focus on OB. Infant fatality is 38% in this community, and we think with training and education we can get that down into single digits. That's really been a focus of ours. Our first year, we had 117 babies born and no fatalities, so we've really put a dent into the infant fatality percentages there. Then we have water and sanitation. 40,000 people a day have clean drinking water through our nine water filtration systems, and 1,100 toilets that we've put in the community at homes; little outhouses in these homes.

The last thing we did was a vocational school that we were just getting ready to open before COVID hit. We paused on that a little bit while we're getting things in order, but that's that next step for that transition for these kids when they come out of the orphanage and the school; giving them a skill set to be successful in a local environment. Not just giving them an education and then turning them loose, but then giving them that training for job-specific things there in the community.

That all happened in 2014. I had to go down there five or six times a year, lead groups down there and trips. It's been life-changing, but what it also helped us do is two years into that, Bridget and I sat down and we said, "We have to come back to St. Louis. There is a need here locally and I love what we're doing there, but we have to have a local component to this." We came back and quietly started looking. We're a really good partner. We fundraise for you, so everybody wants us to be their partner. We quietly started looking and got connected to someone that's very connected to the inner city. I said, "The city is where I want to go." As I look at our city as a whole, I just feel like there's a need there. I'm not afraid of tough areas in Haiti. We chose Haiti knowing it's one of the toughest places to do ministry, so we're okay with that. We found an amazing partner, his name's Andre Alexander, at the Tabernacle Community Development Corporation. My wife and I sat down with Andre and said we were connected by a mutual friend, so we had a lot of respect for him going into it. Essentially said, "I'm not going to tell you anything about us or what we're looking for, but I want to hear your plan."

He just rattled things off, and my wife and I actually had a checklist going into this. Like, "Okay, what are some of the things that we've seen successful that are going to carry over?" It was like we gave him the answer sheet. He was just checking everything off. Just a brilliant mind, an amazing heart, and a tremendous leader. We said, "This is our guy. This is what we need to do."

We started a partnership with him to fund his vision. Again, this is his vision not ours, and his program. What we do is help him and his organization buy and renovate homes in a very targeted area that surrounds his church so that he's the center point of that. They're renovated by all local contractors, so we don't do any volunteer work. It's more expensive, but it's also the way that we get to support the community. What we do is we hire probably 50 to 60 people per every job, but we also hired a 77% minority rate. What we're doing is saying, "This is your community, and we want you to be a part of that transformation." We learned that in Haiti. Again, like I said, instead of us coming down and telling them what to do and taking the jobs from them, we're now coming down and creating those jobs, and what you see is the stories have been tremendous.

I could share all day on the stories that have come out of this from the workers' standpoint, from the community standpoint. From people that aren't even benefiting directly from the program but that are all in on the program and take care of it and take ownership of it because it's truly been theirs to create.

Then once the homes are done, and these are homes that were built. The last home I think was built in 1896. We restore it to its original beauty and then families are placed into these homes. These families are placed in through a long interview process. We're looking for the families that truly want change for their kids. The only requirement is you have to have kids. That's who we want to make the difference on. They get in there, they pay rent. It's a discounted rent, but they pay rent based on what they can afford, and then they have a few commitments they have to make.

We say, "We'll come halfway, you come the other half. We're not going to give you anything. You're going to have to put some sweat equity in here because this is how you're going to change." They have to volunteer in the community two to four hours a month as a family, and then they have to meet with our community coordinator that's been placed with them. Every family is placed with a community coordinator that is in constant contact with them and writes a program specifically for their family.

Not a blanket approach that we're forcing upon them, but finding out what their needs are and then addressing those needs through all the resources and non-profits and things that are around that we have access to. It's been amazing. We have six houses that have been completed through Tabernacle Development Community Corporation. Most of these are duplexes. You're getting two families in each one, and it's been tremendous.

Again, it's supporting the people in the local community, elevating their platform. It's not about Brace for IMPACT. We're not looking for the credit and we're not plastering our name-- In North St. Louis, we're very isolated. We don't talk about it as much because it's taken us so long to build trust and relationships. We wanted to do that through our partner and not through us.

Lisa: I Love that you're involving the community. I love that. You're lifting up the whole community, Kyle, by what you're doing; giving the local contractors jobs. It's incredible. You call that whole area The Village.

Kyle: Our partner when he gave us, one of the things I said to him, I said, "I need to know that you have a plan and not a vision. I can't invest in a vision because visions they change, and I can't take our donors' money and invest in things that aren't ready to go." He said, "Well, great. Here's my business plan." He had this business plan and it was The Village, and that's what he called it. It takes a village, and that's really what we're trying to create, is create an environment where these people have support all around. There are some other things that he's doing in the community through a hub project that's ongoing right now that's going to bring in a lot of nonprofits.

There's going to be a healthcare provider in there for medical services for the people in the community. There's some amazing stuff that's happening, and that's what we wanted to be. The one thing I know is I'm not an expert in a lot of things, and I don't want to be and I don't want to pretend to be. What we want to do is we want to take our lane, and we want to do what that is. Then we want to bring in the people that are experts in these other areas and they can say, "Hey, here's an area that's becoming a thriving area, an area that's worth investing in."

If our partner thinks they're a worthy partner as well and have the best interest of the people in the community, and they have that expertise in this area, then let's bring them in and let them go. We're going to dilute ourselves if we try to spread ourselves out and cover everything. Let's focus on supporting the housing piece, and then let's bring in other people that are really good at other things that are going to be great partners. It's the same thing in Haiti. We can just go and spend our money on building all these buildings, but it's not going to do anything. Let's find our lane and what we do.

We've brought in Baylor University to help us with the engineering down in Haiti. We've brought in a tremendous medical staff, Mission318 and Mercy doctors and nurses that have helped us and taken over our hospital training and education.

I don't know anything about medical. I have access to amazing people that can play those roles and do the education side of this. SLU School of Education we partner with to help empower and train our teachers so that we can get the most out of our teachers that we have, and that's going to trickle down to the education of our students.

That's really a strength of ours, find the right people that you can plug in, but it has to be the right partner. We've walked away from partnerships that just weren't-

Lisa: Weren't right.

Kyle: -catching the vision, you can tell they were going to be difficult to work with, but people that truly say, "This is your project. You guide us, but here's the things that we can bring to the table." That's a huge way of how we've had strength.

Lisa: Yes. There may be somebody listening now that says, "I've got the strength." We'll talk to you about how you can get involved. I want to talk about Tricia Zimmer Ferguson. This good friend of mine and her family owns Kaldi's. I know that you've got a new initiative; you're calling it Brew for Impact. Tell us about that because you're also engaging the local coffee farmer, and anything.

Kyle: Yes. Brett Israelson, who runs Kaldi's-- I don't know what his job title is, but he's right underneath the owners there. He was going to Haiti with us and reached out beforehand and said, "Hey. Haiti used to be a massive coffee producer to the world. I think there's a way we can do something. On this trip, can we go do some coffee stuff?" It just didn't work out. Then and I said, "You need to go first. You need to see it because to get to the coffee farms, by the way, is like 16 hours on these roads, and I ain't driving on those roads. We'll have to do a separate trip." We looked into it a little bit, and then he got there and got to see it and understand it. He got back and this was kind of his thing.

He said, "Kaldi's wants to and can support you, but instead of just sponsoring an event here and there, we can create something for you that can be long-term."

He had a buddy of his that was already sourcing coffee from Haiti out of Philadelphia, and he reached out to him and he said, "Hey, here's this farmer that I use. This company, they've been in business for over a hundred years, family farm in southern Haiti." We got the samples from them and Brett called me in and he said, "This coffee is amazing."

We bring those beans and we ended up buying a pallet. It supports the local farmers, it's a co-op there, so farmers from all over the southern part of Haiti are bringing their beans in. They land here in St. Louis, Kaldi's takes and they roast them. They created the bag for us, and then we essentially sell it out of my basement. It's on our website, and then we ship it out of here. We have a subscription, so for every three months you select the amount of bags you want. It's the cheapest price on that, and then we just dropship it to you every three months.

The impact that the coffee has, one, it's really good coffee. We just thought this is a great way because everybody's drinking coffee. Secondly, all the money we make on this goes to sending our kids to school in Haiti. For every 24 bags of coffee we sell, sends one kid to school for an entire year. Provides an education for an entire year. You're drinking coffee every morning anyway. Why not drink coffee that's going to go and help change a community and change a child's life and a family's life?

We launched that a year ago, and we are really trying to grow that as we see this as really a long-term success. Coffee is not going anywhere, and we just think this is really a long-term success for the organization. How we can create some stability of funding for our school. We hope that this can carry over. We want to keep it in Haiti because it originated in Haiti and we want to keep it there. We, in the future, see this as taking over and also being able to affect St. Louis once we grow this thing to where we can.

Lisa: Yes, it's a sustainable model.

Kyle: Yes.

Lisa: You're already drinking coffee people, [chuckles] so you might as well drink this.

Kyle: Drink something that has an impact.

Lisa: Yes, for sure. Kyle, this is called *Something Extra*. I believe and I know you believe this too, every person is gifted with unique abilities and talents and skills, but what do you believe is the something extra that every leader needs, in your opinion?

Kyle: I've played with some amazing leaders. Played for amazing managers that have tremendous leadership skills. I feel like running a nonprofit, running a business, if you're a great leader, it's interchangeable. I feel like if you can run a nonprofit at a high level, you can go jump into one of the biggest businesses and run it. It's all about adapting. It's all the same. It's the way you treat people, it's the way you get the most out of your employees and workers that are going to make you successful. If you're that successful, you're going to be able to learn the industry that you're jumping into. I think it's very interchangeable.

Successful people are going to be successful wherever you put them, and that comes in sports, that comes in business, and all those things. For me, I think it's the ability to know your strengths and weaknesses and be aware of that. I think a lot of leaders that fail are people that think that they're experts in every area, and try to convince people of that. It's their biggest downfall, and everybody sees it. It's so obvious that this is not a strength of yours. The great leaders surround themselves with people that have strengths in the areas that they don't, and are okay with letting go and allowing those people to grow.

As an organization, I would say that's our success. As I mentioned, we know what our strengths are and we go from there. From baseball, I'll tell you that the reason I made it to the major leagues and the reason that I was able to stick, is because I found out what made me successful and I perfected that. I knew exactly where and how to throw my fastball. I knew what pitch needed to follow that. I knew how to use my changeup and my curveball off of all of those pitches, and what location it needed to be in.

I learned that through the struggle of the minor leagues, but what got me to the big leagues, and then what ultimately got me to stay there, is I mastered it.

I perfected it to where I could do it in my sleep, I could do it with my eyes closed, and I spend so much time perfecting my craft that I was able to make it. In baseball, you're one of the best in the world if you can make it to that point. In business, it's the same way. Find out what you're really good at, and find ways to use that to be successful.

Then whatever you're not good at, it's probably not worth your time to continue to try to develop that versus going and finding somebody that has that strength, and utilizing them and allowing them to take it and run. If you spend your time trying to develop all these different aspects and cover everything, you're not going to be able to do it.

Lisa: Right. It's a delusion of your focus and your energy if you're trying to be good at everything. I think that that is amazing advice. I always say it's self-awareness. Being self-aware of who you are. Know who you are, and then have the humility and the vulnerability to say, "I need help in this area. I need help in that area," but be the best that you can be at what you're good at. That is such great advice. Kyle, I am suspecting there's going to be a lot of people after hearing this that are like, "I love what Kyle's doing. Yes, I want to get involved."

Tell the listeners, if this is resonating with their heart right now and they say, "Yes, I've been looking for something to get involved in," how can they get involved? What are the different ways? How would they go about doing that?

Kyle: If you go to our website, braceforimpact46.com, you can see a lot more information and videos of the things that we get to do. The one struggle we have, we're not a very heavy volunteer organization. That's a weakness of ours, but it's also something that we're not willing to compromise for the integrity of our projects. The one thing we don't want to do is run people down to Haiti every couple of weeks and create a show that goes along with that. I'm in North City, St. Louis as well. We're very respectful to that community and our workers and leaders there.

We're not a hands-on organization, which I think hurts us as a nonprofit. A lot of people want to get hands-on.

We do have a couple of volunteer events throughout the year. We have our food packing event. We package 86,000 meals and send to Haiti. That's a great way to get your kids involved to actually be a part of that, packing the food we're sending down. Then on the financial side, we need funding to continue to buy and renovate these homes, employ these workers, and pay the community coordinator to work with these families. In Haiti, we have a few more creative ways just because of all the programs we have.

We have a Sponsor a Child program where you can pick one of the children at the orphanage. I would caution you to read through that closely. We're very protective and careful of how we do that. We want to make sure that every child is treated the same. We don't point children out that aren't sponsored or that have multiple sponsors. We want to make sure that everybody is loved and cared for in the same way, so make sure you read through that. Then also our coffee is a great way, and sharing about our coffee. If you're a coffee drinker, you probably know like 10 other coffee drinkers off the top of your head, and just sharing the fact that "Hey, this coffee is making a difference," is really a great way.

In this element we're in right now, as all nonprofits are, it has been a tough year. We've had to make some really tough decisions, especially in Haiti, on our budget, and how we've had to go about things to make sure that we're here for the long haul. That we're able to support them through not only this short rough period but make it through this and five years still be successful.

Lisa: Right, that it's going to be stable.

Kyle: It's been a very difficult year but we're going to make it, we're going to survive it, and we're going to continue to support those even in tough times.

Lisa: Say the URL one more time for your website, because I'm suspecting that people can go there and buy the coffee.

Kyle: Yes. It's braceforimpact46.com, and then on there you'll see the shop icon. You can pull down on that and it will take you to our Shopify. I'll get the alert on my phone and I'll get to work. I'll write a handwritten note to you, and we'll package it up and get it out. Sometimes my kids will write a note to you too, so if it's a little sloppy don't be mad. [chuckles]

Lisa: Sure. I think that's awesome to get your kids engaged in that. Well, Kyle, this has just been so much fun. It has been a joy for me just to sit and have a conversation with you. I know that your story, I know everything is going to be so impactful for our listeners. Impact. Use that word impact. [chuckles]

Kyle: That's right. I appreciate the platform and the opportunity to share.

Lisa: Thank you very much.

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