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Darron Devillez: What Forensics Did For Me

Darron Devillez

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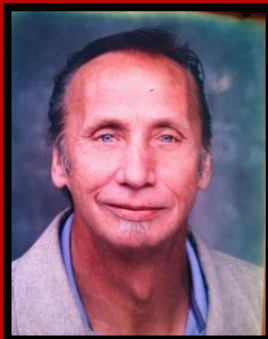
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Alumni Corner

Darron Devillez: What Forensics Did For Me Grossmont Community College/ San Diego State University Forensic Alumni (2011-2015)



Darron Devillez

Darron Devillez is a member of the *Project Rebound* staff and Adjunct Faculty member at San Diego State University. He competed for Grossmont Community College and San Diego State University from 2011-2015. As a competitor his favorite event was prose and his favorite comment on a ballot was "You are the complete package." His greatest forensics accomplishment was helping his team take 8th place at AFA Nationals his senior year.

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Darron Devillez: What Forensics Did for Me

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***ALUMNI CORNER:** The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program's very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni's stories.*

Keywords: forensics, benefits of forensics, Alumni Corner

For me, there is a direct link between my forensic involvement and my success in college. Six years ago, I was a non-traditional student. I was a 57 year old homeless veteran diagnosed with PTSD but I was fortunate to get help and the opportunity to go to college where my counselor enrolled me in a public speaking class.

One of my speeches was on homeless veterans. I sought to convince my classmates to think of these people with empathy and to assist them in finding homes, free health clinics, and, most importantly, their families with whom they may have lost touch. I asked them to listen to the stories of veterans and the hardships they suffered. By doing so, I suggested, we might reduce the devastating 22 lives lost each day in this population. After my speech, my professor asked me to join the forensic team. I accepted her invitation and that year I took a third place trophy at Phi Rho Pi, the community college national championship tournament.

Validated for the first time in my adult life, I was hooked. After community college, I transferred to San Diego State University. The first thing I did was to introduce myself to the Director of Forensics. Before the season officially started, I had three events ready for competition and was working on a fourth. The Director was impressed but reminded me of the grade point requirement needed to be on the squad.

For me, validation came from the competitive speaking activity called forensics.

Using the Toulmin formula I learned in forensics – claim, data, warrant – I started receiving A grades on my papers. Additionally, I transferred the same work ethic demanded in forensics to my other academic courses. As a result, I repeatedly made the dean's list, received multiple scholarships, while winning numerous forensic awards at both the state and national levels.



As my undergraduate studies came to an end, I applied to the master's program and was accepted. For my thesis, I wrote about something near and dear to me – veterans with PTSD.

Six years has passed since I became involved in forensics. I am no longer homeless, drug-dependent, or on the verge of joining the 22-a-day crisis. If you would have told me that my validation would come in the form of a competitive public speaking activity; I would have scoffed at you.

Today I am living with my family, free from any drug dependency, legal or illegal. I have traveled all over the world with forensic teams, and have just completed my master's degree. Forensics changed me. It highlighted my potential. It taught me how to research. It taught me structure, both oral and written. It taught me about the importance of community.

I am determined to find a teaching job in a community college where I can extol the benefits of forensics and its many applications. Forensics helped return me to the man I once was and I know it can aid others as well.

**Darron's Advice:
The most important
part of any speech, is
that walk to the
podium.**

