Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #25
“Young adults serving their future and ours”
Sno-Isle Libraries, May 31, 2019

Ken Harvey: 00:00 In today's episode, we have a wonderful interview with Rilee Louangphakdy, and the TEDx Sno-Isle Libraries Millennial speakers from TEDxSnoIsleLibraries 2016 and 2017. Welcome to season two and episode 25 of Check It Out, the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds.

Speaker 2: 00:28 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 00:36 Welcome to Check It Out, the podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds. My name is Rilee Louangphakdy. I'm your host for this episode. Before I begin, you might think, "Gee, that's not Ken Harvey." I'm not Ken Harvey. I am the special guest host for today. We are taking over and we as in the young Gen Z generation are taking over the Check It Out podcast for this episode. And I do have a very special episode for you guys. I have around me, four very outstanding individuals, peers of mine in the field that I'm so excited to catch up with. So sit back, enjoy, listen to this conversation and yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 01:17 So I just want to begin by introducing, we have across from me, Mark Perez. And actually, before I begin, we have with us, these are TEDx speakers, but within two separate groups, there's public speakers and there's scientists and some of the public speakers right at the table. We have Mark Perez, he's a Henry M. Jackson High School graduate. He's about to work for Houston Kraft, which is a very popular motivational speaker. And he's also going to be doing to UW Bothell, excuse me, UW Seattle next spring?

Mark Perez: 01:49 Next fall.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 01:50 Next fall.

Mark Perez: 01:51 Yeah.

(Continued)
Rilee Louangphakdy: 01:52 And then we have Sargun Sargi Handa. She's also public speaker. She is at Kamiak High School senior, right?

Sargun Handa: 01:59 Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Rilee Louangphakdy: 02:01 And she also spoke at WE Day, which is this huge event, right?

Sargun Handa: 02:04 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 02:05 Huge event. And then I'm just going across the table right now so we can get the voices distinguished. With our scientists groups we have Dhruvik Parikh. He is a Stanford University student.

Dhruvik Parikh: 02:16 That's right.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 02:17 Awesome. And then next to me is also Harshu Musunuri. She is also a Stanford University student, right?

Harshu Musunuri: 02:24 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 02:24 Cool. So now that I got those out of the way, welcome, guys to Check It Out.

Dhruvik Parikh: 02:29 Thank you.

Mark Perez: 02:30 Sweet.

Sargun Handa: 02:30 Thanks.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 02:31 So all of us here we're TEDx speakers. I just want to throw out the conversation with the TEDx experience how was it like going on to the stage and preparing yourself for that big circle?

Mark Perez: 02:45 I would say for me personally, it was pretty cool. Just kind of like go and watch and I was actually right before Dhruvik and I remember watching just kind of Dhruvik, "I'm kind of going up." But it's so weird. They prepare you so much that you don't even feel that nervous because it just kind of wired into you. I think what they do with Ted is they do a good job of just making sure it's your voice and nobody else's. And so I felt pretty good going up.

Dhruvik Parikh: 03:12 Yeah, I would agree with Mark. I think the process that we went through, in terms of, preparing for not only what we were going to say but for the environment that we're going to say it in was really helpful so that when you actually got onto the stage. Of
course, you have butterflies and whatnot. But it didn't feel like I was in a completely new situation because I had imagined it and practiced for that specific situation.

Harshu Musunuri: 03:35 I'm going to echo the others here. I think the preparation process through Sno-Isle TEDx was incredible, with the resources that they provided, just being able to speak with coaches and get better get a better understanding of like the public speaking process, and how really to present the best version of the idea that you want to convey to the rest of the world is.

Sargun Handa: 03:56 For me, it was actually really stressful. But yes, the preparation definitely helped. And when I was on stage and I started to speak, I realized that it wasn't that stressful. The passion just overtook me and the preparation like it was just innate, it was in my head like I knew what I was doing. So yeah, I agree with Dhruvik on that.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 04:15 Yeah, so starting with you. And I'm going to toss this question around too. Can you explain a little bit about your talk? The title and just briefly was it about.

Sargun Handa: 04:24 So Be A Voice Not An Echo was actually a tribute to my 11th grade English teacher. Her name is Miss Scara. And she has always taught me to be a kind person and she is my huge role model in life. So she has this sign in her room that says, 'Be a voice not an echo' and she always pushed me to speak out against like injustices or speak out and help others.

Sargun Handa: 04:46 So that's why I named the talk that. And my talk is about my personal struggles with Crohn's disease, depression and the suicide of my own friend and how a community which is actually where the TED talk was held was at Kamiak high school, which is my school, I was talking about how a community can move on past that and start succeeding in the future, which is through community service.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 05:11 Want to do the next part?

Mark Perez: 05:12 What was that?

Rilee Louangphakdy: 05:13 Your talk.

Mark Perez: 05:14 Oh, yeah. So I'm more than you think you are. Yeah. So that was mainly just like my high school advisor Mr. Briggs. He always did this talk on the amazing law of influence. And if you don't know
what that is, it's just basically this quote. 'When one life touches another, potentially both lives are changed and when one life touches another potentially, the whole world was changed' and I really went into depth and how one person changes your life. You do great things and then because of that somebody else's life changes. And that's basically in summary what it was all about.

Sargun Handa: 05:49 I really love that theory.
Mark Perez: 05:51 Thank you.
Dhruvik Parikh: 05:52 Yeah, it's nice.
Sargun Handa: 05:53 I've experienced that personally with Mark. He's really touched me and even after the TEDx talk, he still stayed connected with that.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 06:00 Oh, really?
Mark Perez: 06:00 Yeah.
Sargun Handa: 06:01 So you stayed true to your talk.
Mark Perez: 06:03 Thank you. Yeah.
Dhruvik Parikh: 06:04 I finally agree.
Mark Perez: 06:05 Thank you.
Rilee Louangphakdy: 06:06 Or it's because of the table.
Harshu Musunuri: 06:07 It's good to hear. Yeah. So my talk was on channeling your inner Renaissance. The essence of it was really derived from my experiences over the years dealing with different science research projects and sort of how I came to the realization that a lot of the work that I was doing relied on the intersections of a lot of different disciplines. And as someone growing up, thinking that I was going to be like going into a certain field and hoping to become like an expert in that field I realized there's a lot more that you can gain from simply collaborating across disciplines.

Harshu Musunuri: 06:45 And merging of those ideas is really how we're going to be able to address some of the biggest issues in this world as we move into the future where everything is very technologically advanced. And I realized there's a lot that we all can do. It's not
just scientists that can sort of gain from this idea of interdisciplinary innovation. And I was sort of arguing how everyone in their own little way can incorporate this idea into their life and what they can gain from that.

Mark Perez: 07:19 Nice.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 07:20 Awesome.

Dhruvik Parikh: 07:21 Alright, so for me, my talk was titled, freedom from fossil fuels is closer than you think. So basically, I was talking a little bit about my own experiences working with research projects in the field of sustainability and with the goal of eliminating climate change. And so I talked a little bit about like the different kinds of theories and approaches that I worked with. But a major focus of my talk was that how everyone kind of like in their own different ways can contribute to this important cause and take advantage of their different situations. In order to best contribute.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 08:01 Yeah, and I remember I was the host for [crosstalk 00:08:04]

Dhruvik Parikh: 08:05 Yeah, that's right.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 08:05 I presented you and Mark, huh?

Dhruvik Parikh: 08:06 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 08:06 Yeah.

Dhruvik Parikh: 08:07 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 08:07 That was awesome. No, yeah, it's a great experience. And being on stage on the red circle. I think a lot of the audience's when we have other TEDx speakers on the podcast, I feel like at least for me, if I didn't know about it, I would be wondering what's it like to be in front of the TEDx audience or even that the TED audience. So when you're on stage, on that circle, what's going through your mind? Do you like recite... Do you think about reciting that talk over and over again before you do it? Or you just kind of go out there and project?

Mark Perez: 08:39 I would say like part of it is good, yeah, it is like scripted, but I don't want to say that. It's just so rehearsed. It kind of just flows out, it's how you said. It was kind of stressful at times but because of that stress, it's so personal. And so you get up on the
stage, after that first three lines you just kind of in a zone that's just indescribable, it's like a runner's high but for speakers.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 09:08 That's a good analogy. So when you guys are on the stage, did you feel any sense of nervousness? Or was it just you're too scared that you don't feel the nervousness?

Harshu Musunuri: 09:21 If I remember Mark, you just said that you were only hungry. You didn't feel like you were just like, "I was just hungry the whole time." Right?

Mark Perez: 09:28 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 09:29 Hunger drives us to distant places.

Mark Perez: 09:33 We had so much food. That was great.

Harshu Musunuri: 09:35 How many sandwiches did you eat

Mark Perez: 09:36 You're like sick. Jimmy John's pretty good plate.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 09:40 Yeah, as long as they don't know about that green room that we have in that the food that's laid out for us between talks. That's nice.

Mark Perez: 09:48 Yeah, good stuff.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 09:50 After the talk, when you did the talk, right when you walked offstage, what's it like? What did you hear from people right after the stage? And start with you.

Harshu Musunuri: 10:00 I mean, it was amazing just to be done and like see the sort of visual impact of what you had just said, being reflected back with people smiling and clapping for you. That's always validating, I guess. But it was really cool to see how the idea that you had just sort of voiced took its own direction other people's minds and how they sort of built off of that, and would come up to you and say, "Oh, in my experience, your talk reminded me of this." And seeing that was very valuable. Because like, I feel like the whole concept of Ted is ideas worth spreading and ideas being able to spark other ideas.

Sargun Handa: 10:45 Yeah, for me, when I finished the talk, first of all it's like a breath of relief or not relief, it's all this hard work that I did was finally... I'd seen the result of that. And people that came up to me crying or they came up and they were connecting same thing. They're like, "I relate to what you said because this is a
story in my life or something similar happened." So for me TEDx was more of sharing a story and then others got to share their stories with me after the event and it was like this give and take or it was the reward.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 11:21 So go ahead.

Dhruvik Parikh: 11:23 I was just going to echo what the others said. I think right after I said my last words and started walking off the stage. A lot of the people backstage had maybe already heard my talk during the dress rehearsal or otherwise, but it was just really amazing to see how the people who hadn't heard it backstage just having even brief little conversations with them. And just like seeing their reactions to my talk was really validating to see that. Complete strangers were able to connect with what I was saying and were able to have their own kind of like what Harshu said, their own versions of their interpretations of your ideas.

Mark Perez: 12:05 First of all, I got to say I remember with Dhruvik we went to that Toastmasters club not intentionally the other.

Dhruvik Parikh: 12:11 Yeah.

Mark Perez: 12:12 My favorite comment was from I forgot his name but I think he was the president at the time. And he goes, "You know what I really loved about your talk, you didn't completely geek out and I actually felt smart because I could understand it." But yeah. Now, for me, it's really cool because I had two people watching live and then one person in the audience and all three of them just talked to me. And like, "Oh, this is so cool. They're watching it."

Mark Perez: 12:37 It's finally I get some friends like support and but right after we all go to the green room, I don't know what happened to you guys but when you walk into the green room and everybody kind of stands up and shares and we all sit back down and watch the next we do the same thing. It was cool to have that experience that not most people get to have like getting to see the transition from one speaker to the next to the next and then being that transition. It was definitely really cool.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 13:02 Yeah.

Sargun Handa: 13:03 And the thing is that not only do they like when you go to the green room after your talk, they cheer for you, but also they cheer for you before your talk.
Mark Perez: 13:11 Yeah.

Sargun Handa: 13:11 It's like before the starting line and then after the finish line, you have this community of people supporting you. And that's the TEDx community.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 13:21 Was it you said that the runner's spirit or something? It's like a running high.

Dhruvik Parikh: 13:23 Yeah, a runner's high. It was almost like the MVP walking into the locker room after the game. Like [crosstalk 00:13:29]


Rilee Louangphakdy: 13:33 And so you're talking about you know, didn't text through you're talking all that?

Mark Perez: 13:36 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 13:37 Given the buzzing. What did you guys hear from your schools? Or your other friends about the TED talk?

Mark Perez: 13:46 I didn't get anything from my school. In fact, I didn't know that the Jackson High School had a cool website. I guess they put you and I, Dhruvik, they put our stuff on the thing.

Dhruvik Parikh: 13:57 Yeah, I think it was on the web page. Yeah.

Mark Perez: 13:58 I had no idea and then I get like a text a couple weeks saying like, "Hey, by the way you're on the Jackson High School website." "Oh, cool." But I didn't really get anything just because I go to a community college and when you're in a community college it's not a high school where it's just everything kind of like when something big happens everybody knows. But it was cool to get support from close friends and family and they were like, "Hey, with you the whole time." That was definitely very appreciated.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 14:25 From our high school speakers at the time though. How was it like coming back to school or here from school after you delivered your talk?

Dhruvik Parikh: 14:34 Oh, yeah, I think it was really kind of interesting experience to come back because right after the talk since the recording wasn't like available only like a few people had maybe like seen the talk. Some of my friends were in the audience and some watched live but there wasn't really, I guess much knowledge of
the whole TEDx thing at the time. But then when the video is uploaded, I think that's when people... A lot of people watched it. I think my government teacher actually, showed it to all of his classes over the course of the day.

Dhruvik Parikh:  15:09

And after that, just had random people in the halls coming up to me and talking to me about it and just felt really good that part of my goal and the reason for going into TEDx everything was that I could spread my ideas. And I think that was just the realization of that was when I was just at school and people were coming to me talking to me about these kinds of ideas.

Harshu Musunuri:  15:31

Nice, yeah, sort of the same experience, because there was a delay between the actual talk happening and when the talk was published online. But once people did get to see it, it was really fun to have conversations stemming off of that. And have teachers look at it and say, "Oh, I didn't even know that you did this." So it was sort of a way to have other people learn more about me and me learn more about other people's ideas. So it's a very good wholesome experience, I would say. Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy:  16:01

Yeah.

Sargun Handa:  16:02

For me, well, coincidentally, the event was at my high school. So a lot of people from high school actually attended the event where the dress rehearsals, so people didn't know and eventually just spread by word of mouth. And it was a little overwhelming, like teachers were showing my video at training class too. Yeah. And people just started to know me as the TED Talk girl. So now I'm in charge of organizing assemblies like MLK Day and all that. And so I'm also speaking at assemblies and I'm getting all these like, teachers who are saying, "I've never taught you but now I know who you are."

Sargun Handa:  16:40

Because this teacher for me this email. And it's a lot of recognition over like 15 minutes of my life. And so it's a kind of a bittersweet thing for me because there's so many things I've done throughout my whole high school career. But it's this unique thing that not many teenagers have done TEDx talks. That sets me apart from everyone. And so I'm finally getting that recognition, even though I did that work before, so it's a little bittersweet for me.

Rilee Louangphakdy:  17:09

Got that. The school rep that we're on home grounds and she's, "Oh, this is my school." Yeah, I know, it's cool. What's the most common thing you guys got from the TED Talk? Like, did you get like, "Oh man, how can you guys talking from those many
people?" What's the most common comment or question that
you got after the talk?

Mark Perez: 17:34 I would say the most common thing is actually when the video is
released, all my friends were like, "Hey, did we ever watch you
on TED talk?"

Sargun Handa: 17:39 Yeah, that's actually true.

Mark Perez: 17:42 I'm like, "Well, I was kind of there. I don't think it's necessary."

Rilee Louangphakdy: 17:46 Well, do you?

Mark Perez: 17:46 No, I actually, I tried watching. In fact, I think it was my history
teacher back in high school who's like, "Hey, I want to watch it." I
was like, "Oh, it's okay. It's a little weird. I'm there. I don't want
to repeat the..." But he makes me watch it. I'm like, "Okay, I
guess that wasn't too bad." But that definitely was common
thing and just, "Hey, have you watched it?"

Dhruvik Parikh: 18:09 I actually had the same experience. Because I never felt like
watching it. It just felt like super weird hearing my own voice
and things like that. It's whenever someone near me is playing
it, I just plug my ears or something. But the one time in my
government class, my teacher Mr. Trip, put it on and I mean, I'm
in class, I can't really leave and so I had to sit through it. And it
was tough to be there hearing my own voice and everyone else
around you is kind of awkward and kind of weird but I think
after doing it the first time I was like, "Okay, that wasn't too
bad."

Mark Perez: 18:45 You kind of get used to it.

Harshu Musunuri: 18:48 Yeah, I think it's the same experience. People ask, "Did you
watch it?" And if the answer is, no, or like maybe or something,
then they'd like force you to watch it with them.

Sargun Handa: 19:00 For me, it was mostly like, "You gave a TEDx talk at 16?" And
then they asked me how I did it. And they'd asked me how I did
it and they'd ask me how they could do it too, which the good
thing that was that is mostly high school students I was talking
to. And the whole point of having TEDx at Kamiak High School is
in order to reach more youth speakers and youth that wanted
to be involved with that. So the most common reaction I got
was, "How can I get involved?"

Mark Perez: 19:26 Yeah.
Rilee Louangphakdy: 19:27 Just a reminder to the audience, you're listening to Check It Out podcast. We're talking with four very outstanding young TEDx speakers. I want to catch up on after the TEDx experience and obviously I follow you guys on Instagram. So there's only so much I can learn from Instagram. But let's just go around the table. Start with the public speakers, Mark, what happened after the TEDx talk? What are you doing now?

Mark Perez: 19:58 So what's happening now? Well, definitely a good thing to have on your resume. It's like, actually, no, my favorite thing is in class, since I still go to school it's like, "Hey, yeah, let's do an icebreaker with something no one knows about you." I'm like, "I did a TED talk once." And so now that definitely a cool icebreaker to have just that one thing or I used to always want to be able to say, "Hey, I did a TED talk once." So now, I can say that. That's definitely pretty cool. But as for my actual life, it definitely boosted my ability to get up on a stage.

Mark Perez: 20:28 Like Rilee mentioned earlier, she just actually got back from California. I'm working with Houston Kraft. Trying to spread a message and making kindness normal. That's going to be really fun. It's going to be happening in spring. It's definitely helped me with just learning how to communicate. It's a tool that I have to use. That will help me build speeches, help people with presentations, just kind of the little things that kind of come up and just building relationships, I think. In this process, it was more than just the TED Talk. It was getting to communicate with people who think alike. And that was pretty cool.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 21:11 So how did you start working with Houston Kraft? I remember at the event you told me about how you want to be a speaker and you're doing the Toastmasters and everything else. But how did you get that opportunity with Houston Kraft? Who's a really big popular motivational speaker.

Mark Perez: 21:26 Yeah. So I'd actually known him for a year at that point. Because of mentor of mine who introduced me to him. We just kind of stayed in contact and he posted something on Facebook saying, "Hey, we're looking for like 14 speakers to be a part of our team." And then we reached out to a few people that you really want it to be on. So I applied and sure enough, he's like, "Hey, come to LA." And I have to buy a plane ticket but it's cool.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 21:53 Just casual, "Come to LA."

Mark Perez: 21:54 Yeah.
That's dope dude. And other than that, you have your own website.

Yeah.

So are you doing practically doing deeds or do you just release it?

Yeah. So I'm very actively doing it. Like once a month I go to like a high school teacher leadership. This past August, I went to Richland High School, which was my biggest gig. They pay for hotel and food and everything. Which was really nice because it was like, "Okay, now it's like, kind of the compound effect where it's just now slowly starting to gain traction now it's slowly starting to become like a real..." [crosstalk 00:22:34]

It's the real deal.

Yeah, and that's definitely pretty cool.

That's awesome, dude. And Sargi, you have your own website too.

Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Which both your guys' website is, it's amazing with... It's really professional, has all your stories, there are recommendations. I was looking through it, and goes like, "Wow, this is awesome." So on the same note, how did you start with WE Day? Was that before or after the TED Talk?

WE Day was after the TED talk in May. This may. Yeah.

So falling. Yeah.

Yeah.

So how did you get that?

So after my TEDx talk, I kind of went into this promotional mode roles, I wanted to spread my message as much as possible and get into the public speaking grind. So WE Day, it was just a dream of mine since I was so young, I didn't know I was ever going to do a TEDx talk but I knew that someday I wanted to speak at WE Day. Because community service has been my passion for a long time. So the event that I spoke at in Seattle had over 16,000 people. And it was just... I would not have been
able to do it without a TEDx talk. Like if I didn't have the experience of the talk before. I would have just been frozen on that stage.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 23:53 How did you talk for?

Sargun Handa: 23:54 About five minutes. Yeah.


Rilee Louangphakdy: 23:59 So can you explain a little bit about WE Day for people that might not know. Because a huge thing, right?

Sargun Handa: 24:02 Yeah, WE Day's a global event and it's led by Marc and Craig Kielburger. They started this global organization where celebrities will speak around the world in like Tokyo and London and other countries where they have celebrities promote the idea of community service and we is about empowering youth to volunteer around the world because they believe that there's power in youth. Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 24:32 And with the celebrity, so the one that you're at, if I remember Russell Wilson. Who else was there?.

Sargun Handa: 24:39 Olivia Holt, Ezra Twolo, Muhammad Ali's daughter and the boys from Wonder. And the boys from Coco. I don't know. I forgot. A lot of people were in the green room, some Olympians.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 24:58 Wow. So you're in the green room with these celebrities?

Sargun Handa: 25:01 Yeah.

Mark Perez: 25:02 That's awesome.

Sargun Handa: 25:03 And one of my role models ASR that her name's Lizzie Velasquez. And she's this amazing, amazing person. She was on social media, somebody called her out for having this rare disorder that she can't have any, like body fat. So she became an activist about empowering people to love themselves and to help the world and she's my role model. So I got to meet her too.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 25:26 That's awesome.

Sargun Handa: 25:27 Yeah.
Rilee Louangphakdy: 25:28 So sticking with the public speakers of the table. What do you do next after you know that the product of deeds or WE Day those big events, do you just keep going? Because you guys were all still young.

Sargun Handa: 25:42 We're doing writing.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 25:42 Writing?

Sargun Handa: 25:43 Yeah, I'm writing my... I actually just wrote my own book. It's published now. It's called 20 beautiful women and it's volume six. It's a best seller. It's number one and motivational and self-growth in the Kindle Store on Amazon. And by the time that this podcast is out the hard copies will be released too. So I'll definitely be posting about that or selling those on Amazon. And so this book has been really important because it was like my shift from not only public speaking but writing too because that's what I wanted to for the rest of my life is be a public speaker and author. So that's kind of my now what?

Rilee Louangphakdy: 26:21 So you just do like some really big to me so casual too. I was meaning to bring this up too but best selling book series. So a lot of questions but how?

Sargun Handa: 26:34 How? Okay, so I gave a TEDx talk. I spoke as a keynote speaker at my Mayor swearing in ceremony, I'd spoken at middle school assemblies and high school assemblies, I'd spoken at WE Day, and now I was kind of bored. I was like, "Now what?" So then I looked and I was like, "Maybe I should get into writing." And then there's this Huffington Post contributor, her name's Saba Tekle, and she has these series called 20 beautiful women, it's becoming a documentary soon.

Sargun Handa: 27:04 And so I said, "Hey, I'm a public speaker and I think I have a story that you would like to share." Because 20 beautiful women is 20 women write this book, one woman per chapter. And they all share a story in order to empower women around the world to connect with each other and share their stories, too. So I said, "Can I write for your book?" And she said, "Yeah, of course." And she has just been such an amazing person in my life. She's helping me get into the writing scene and she's been publishing stuff for me.

Sargun Handa: 27:38 The how is more... It was kind of self-explanatory. But the why. The why is really important to me. It's like if the you know the why then the how come easily.
Mark Perez: 27:51 I want to add on to that. I think we've kind of had a talks about really like why? What is a why? And so I remember just the importance of having a why statement even. It's just like once you figure that out, once you know why, it just these things happen like I can't explain it. It just life does it. Once you kind of figure out what you want to do, and then why you want. It just opportunity like this manifest. And I think if you're looking into going into speaking, if you're looking at going Drew Baker student route where you want to be a scientist, it's definitely important to know why you want to contribute in the first place.

Dhruvik Parikh: 28:34 I think what Sargi said about, "I was bored." So I think that that's a good example of how our generation is. When you're bored [crosstalk 00:28:43]

Mark Perez: 28:44 Let's just go change the world.

Sargun Handa: 28:45 I mean, I wasn't born of like my message. I feel like ...

Mark Perez: 28:51 There's more to it.

Sargun Handa: 28:53 Yeah, I felt unfulfilled because I knew that there's so many different platforms, especially with Gen Z that you can just spread it everywhere you can spread it through podcasts, through YouTube videos, TEDx talks, books, there's so many ways that I can spread my message. So I'm not just a public speaker. I'm a messenger and this is my message.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 29:12 Pro-active and inspiring.

Mark Perez: 29:15 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 29:15 So on the note that the Mark left off on with the why with scientists, and this I don't mean to sound pretentious does always I'm no scientist, but with the science, he has a doing, obviously, you need to have a good why on why are you doing it? Are you? So flipping the table now? With the sciences now. We'll start with Dhruvik. What's been going on after the TED talk?

Dhruvik Parikh: 29:35 Yeah, so first of all, like I've been continuing to work on like the projects and the research that I talked a little bit about my TED Talk. But I think more so than that, like one of the most interesting experiences that happened after the TED Talk relating to the TED talk was that I was at the science fair, in Pittsburgh in May, and I was approached by someone who had
seen my TED talk. They’re from the Washington State delegation, which knew about the TED talk and they're a science teacher at a high school in Spokane Meet High School.

Dhruvik Parikh: 30:10 And so he was telling me about how he was really like intrigued by some of the ideas that I had and thought that it would be really cool if I came up to Spokane, and spoke to some of his students. And so actually, in January, I'll be giving a keynote speech at the Meet High School stem night.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 30:31 This January?

Dhruvik Parikh: 30:32 This January. Yeah. So I'll have to take some advice from our public speakers to get ready for that. But yeah, so I think that's like one of my... Another one of my interest is that like, kind of like what Sargi said and being a messenger. So I think some of these ideas, I was able to get a little bit of exposure to that by doing my TEDx talk. But I think other routes public speaking or writing are also something that I want to explore in order to really get my ideas out there. Especially to an audience like a school.

Mark Perez: 31:03 Yeah, absolutely.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 31:06 So with that the thing you said in Pittsburgh what was your being there for?

Dhruvik Parikh: 31:12 Yeah. So it was the Intel International Science and Engineering fair. So I was there presenting my research project on batteries for solar energy storage, which I talked about really briefly at the end of my TED Talk because at the time of my TED talk, I hadn't made too much progress on that project. But over the course of the year, I worked on it more and more and so I was presenting the results at that science fair.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 31:38 And?

Dhruvik Parikh: 31:40 And I actually won a Grand Award. A grand prize at the science fair.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 31:47 You're one of the finalists.

Dhruvik Parikh: 31:48 Yeah, I was one of the top three at the [crosstalk 00:31:50]

Rilee Louangphakdy: 31:50 And this is a big deal because so I have my cheat sheet here. And Harshu probably knows about this. Because you were there too, right?
Harshu Musunuri: 31:56 Yeah.

Dhruvik Parikh: 31:56 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 31:56 So this thing this Intel science engineering fair, this is like the Nobel prize of scientists for high school, right?

Dhruvik Parikh: 32:05 Yeah, something like that for high schoolers.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 32:07 Yeah. But I read some people say it's like the Nobel Prize. And Dhruvik, he was in the top three and he won this big prize too. And you won some other stuff too. So both you guys won best in category yourself, right?

Harshu Musunuri: 32:18 Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Dhruvik Parikh: 32:18 Yeah.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 32:18 Yeah. Which is amazing. I know we're all being humble here. But dude, that's amazing.

Dhruvik Parikh: 32:26 Yeah, thank you.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 32:27 So other than that. And you've interned like MIT, right?

Dhruvik Parikh: 32:31 That's right.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 32:31 You've interned at U-dub.

Dhruvik Parikh: 32:32 Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Rilee Louangphakdy: 32:33 And you're going to be speaking with crowds, research symposiums, Spokane. As a scientist and I'm going to pop this question to you too, Harshu, as a scientist, where is that cross between sharing your science and being a public speaker? Trying to communicate to people that don't know much about science and inspiring that. Where's that medium?

Dhruvik Parikh: 32:54 Yeah. I think it's a really like fluid transition between the two. In a sense that like you can do all the science that you want and make all that interesting technologies. But it's not really going to mean anything unless you get the public engaged. And if people are engaged by the work that you're doing and are knowledgeable about some of these things, then that's the really the best way of driving change.
Dhruvik Parikh: 33:20 And so, for me, working with sustainability and things like that, I can't really... If my goal is to defeat climate change, I can try my best in the lab. But really, this is a societal problem. And so we need to educate and engage the rest of the society to do that.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 33:38 Right.

Harshu Musunuri: 33:40 Yeah, I mean, I think one thing that I learned, especially after the TED talk was communicating your ideas is obviously very important. But going out and doing that with audiences that you might not expect to be talking to as a scientist in the lab, is especially important and that's something that I realized with the most recent project that I was working on.

Harshu Musunuri: 34:03 And I realized, some of my research very briefly had to do with coming up with a new way to diagnose and treat sepsis, which is currently one of the leading causes of death in US hospitals. And the fact that most people don't even know that it exists, was very concerning. But also it served as motivation for me to sort of forced me to think, "What else can I do beside working in the lab."

Harshu Musunuri: 34:31 And so that's when I started going to senior centers and speaking to at risk populations, about what some of the risks are for developing this condition and what you can do to sort of prevent coming down with this and what sort of conversations you might want to have with your doctor prior to undergoing certain medical procedures. And the impact that that had was just as valuable as the work that I was doing, in terms of, like the technical side.

Harshu Musunuri: 35:03 And so I think the TED experience was sort of a wake up call, in terms of, how important sharing your idea with not just scientists but everyday people, with everyone around you is how important that is.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 35:22 And so after your TED talk about the part you're talking about with the sepsis. And obviously, I want you to talk about this, but I want to talk about the this. Is it the Simmons competition?

Harshu Musunuri: 35:32 Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Rilee Louangphakdy: 35:33 Yeah. So because this is what you guys were out in Pittsburgh was a Nobel Prize, this was quoted as being the Super Bowl of the high school scientists, they had these different representations but talk about that because you were also one of the finalists in that competition, right?
Harshu Musunuri: 35:52 Yeah, it was like another high school for science research. Basically like the way it worked was that you would submit your research paper that you've written. And you would go through this process where it be written or read by differently grad students. And then you would go through like a screening process within your region, I got to present my research to a panel of professors and PhDs at Caltech. And then they picked the top six across the nation. So one person from each region to go and present at the national competition.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 36:27 And the national competition, she went to Washington DC to do this. And once you’re on that, the finalists will have the six, you automatically basically you get the structure that. They picked Harshu from 2000 other competitors, which is amazing. And so you got to talk about the year research on sepsis and the endotoxins, right?

Harshu Musunuri: 36:49 Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Rilee Louangphakdy: 36:50 Yeah. So it’s amazing. And you've also interned for a lot of organizations like NASA, right?

Harshu Musunuri: 36:56 Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Rilee Louangphakdy: 36:58 So we have heavy hitters on the table right now. Just wanted to throw that out there. But just closing up, I just want to talk about with all you guys do and the things that you do after TEDx and even during the TEDx, I think there’s a message to be said, that doesn’t matter how old you are, or how experienced or unexperienced you are, you have, a message, as long as you have your why, you can share your message and you can do whatever you want out there. But there are some stereotypes with our generation and these are... I'm not saying that these are fact factual stereotypes but there’s rumors like, Oh, we're too dependent on technology, we’re too liberal, we don’t understand how the world works. The world is doomed with us as the future. And if your audience and I’m not pinpoint as anybody. This is me seeing how others view us but what do you say about that? How do you talk to someone? Or how do you present yourself to someone that thinks otherwise of you? Someone that kind of doubts you as a generation as a whole.

Sargun Handa: 38:09 You haven't seen what we can do yet. So why judge before you see our work? And also, we are the future. And that needs to be accepted instead of doubting us and the work that we can do in the future, you can support us. And we can work as a team together to better the future. And Gen Z, we are using technology, you can say we're using it too much and say we're
using it for the wrong ways. But the thing is that technology was here before us. And now we are utilizing it to better the future. And everybody will have different opinions on that. But sometimes giving people the benefit of the doubt is just what makes dreams come true.

Mark Perez: 38:52 I'll jump in and say for people who I guess, put us under that stereotype. I mean, you could say we use technology too much, but it's that technology that saves lives that changes lives. And I think while being young, we might use the technology to go on YouTube and Instagram for a long period of time. But that's not to say generation before us, you know, did their own time, with their own things and their own unique ways of just passing time. But to say that we don't know how the world works, maybe we don't. And I think if there's anything to kind of think about is that we're going to make it work our way.

Mark Perez: 39:33 And regardless of how we do it, it's just going to happen because eventually we're going to be in positions of influence where we decide, "Alright, we don't want people to suffer. We don't want people to live their life in a way that feels oppressive." And it's going to be us that makes that happen.

Dhruvik Parikh: 39:53 Yeah, we definitely. Just to echo what Mark and Sargi were saying. I think the whole concept of this is not how the world works, I think is a kind of weird thing to say. Because the world is never like a static thing. It's always changing. And it always has been through all the past generations. And so I think instead of thinking that the way that things are now are the way that they're going to be in the future. I think if we have a forward-looking mindset and see like, how can we make our world the best version of it, that it can be.

Dhruvik Parikh: 40:28 And one way of doing that is looking at the ideas that young people are bringing. I think throughout the country, there are young people that are... Throughout the country and the world, there are young people that are just doing amazing things in their own fields and own communities. And so if we look at those as examples, of course, yeah, there are young people who maybe are spending their entire days on Instagram or Facebook or whatever. But I think we're all growing together and as we mature and grow older, I think we are heading in a positive trajectory.

Harshu Musunuri: 40:59 Yeah, I think Dhruvik's point about there being teens and young people across the country and around the world, doing big things for the right reasons. Like having a really important why. It exists everywhere. And I think as more of those stories come
to light with messengers like Sargi and Mark and Dhruvik, I think we will come to see that many of these stereotypes are simply stereotypes. And I think publicizing a lot of these efforts is part of that getting the message out there is very important.

Harshu Musunuri: 41:37 Because every generation has sort of drawbacks, right? But I think addressing those drawbacks and seeing how we can use some of the tools that we have today that weren't available to other generations, and seeing how we can use those to our advantage and improve the future is what matters and it's what we should focus on.

Sargun Handa: 42:01 Yeah, and age is just a number when you have a why, and the five people sitting here at this table right now have a why. And so that just shows you that there is hope for the generation to come. Every generation before us has always seen the young people as naive or yeah, they don't know how the world works but who does? We're all just trying to figure it out. So why don't we work together instead of judging other people before seeing their full potential?

Mark Perez: 42:29 I love it.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 42:34 So before we end off, I just want to touch on one more topic. Harshu, you were talking about the tools that generations that we have others didn't. Well, one of the tools that other generations had before we were here was the libraries. And with print media and the other resources, the other libraries, would you say that our generation doesn't use library resources as much as other generations did? Or would you say that we're just we're still using it now? Because there's a good fulcrum between who's using who's not using it.

Dhruvik Parikh: 43:04 I think I would say that it's not really like a black and white. I think from what I've seen and my own personal experience at the library has been is that the way we use libraries has changed. So for example, like now, maybe a couple decades ago, the only reason you would go to the library is for the books and the information that you can get there. But now, I find myself going to the library just to study even if I'm studying, maybe using my technology or books that I brought from elsewhere. I think the environment that the library promotes is really special. And I think that's one of the reasons why we still have libraries today and why libraries are still hubs of learning and of education.
Sargun Handa: 43:51 Libraries are always changing. Yeah, they have more computers now they've audio books, events routines, and I think it's that TMZ is a wide range of those sources like you said.

Mark Perez: 44:06 I'll say like, yeah, just kind of what Dhruvik and Sargi said is libraries now, it definition changes with as age goes on. Where now we have Kindle, now we have computers and we have different purposes for going to the library. But I'll tell you this, I read a lot. I buy my books at the bookstore but I go to a library to read them. It's something about that space, that community space that it's provided that allows for us a time to just intentionally learning and when we intentionally learn that's how we grow and that's how we become educated.

Harshu Musunuri: 44:44 Yeah, I think a lot of us here understand the importance of books and reading. And I think sort of a lot of people underestimate how many people still read. Because, yeah, it doesn't mean... I might not be going to library every week like it used to when I was like five or something but I'm still reading every day. And I think libraries are a way to promote that sort of learning. And yeah, the fact that we have Kindles and ebooks are a big part of how we move forward with the tools that we have today in libraries.

Sargun Handa: 45:25 It's my goal. My goal is to have 20 beautiful women being a library someday.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 45:34 I think [crosstalk 00:45:34]

Mark Perez: 45:34 You'll be on your way.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 45:36 You're in the right place. Ending off this has been a great conversation. I just want throughout one final question and off the episode. All this talk about you know, Gen Z, and obviously the individuals at the table we all know you guys... I know that you guys your futures are set in stone for greatness but if you have to say one final message on how you want other Gen Z's or Millennials or even future generations, what is the one thing that... One advice you would give to them moving forward with their life?

Harshu Musunuri: 46:12 I think one piece of advice might all agree on at this point is to find your why. And to pursue that. As Mark was saying, like once you find that a lot of opportunities sort of just manifest. And you'll find yourself satisfied with what you have and where you're headed. Because your life is sort of aligned with this goal in mind.
Mark Perez: 46:41  What about you Rilee? What's the one thing you want to leave with everyone?

Rilee Louangphakdy: 46:45  I think the why is a strong message that you guys are curating out here. But I think also that along with the why for someone to kind of have an idea of where they want to be, it's kind of synonymous. But where an individual wants to be in the future. When we all talk to people, when we talk to audiences, we tell them, we share our message with them. But on the other hand, what is it that they want? And what is it that they're trying to get out of what we're sharing out there? So to know what you want, which is another way saying to know your why is a necessity in moving forward with where you want to be in the future.

Sargun Handa: 47:23  For me, my advice would be, be a voice not an echo like the title of my talk. And that's because there's a part of my talk where I say that we shouldn't be asking teens what they want to do in the future, we should be asking them what they want to do now and yes, that's knowing what you want, knowing your why, knowing your wants. It's being self-reflective and introspective and understanding that age is just a number and that you can still be wise and mature and purposeful. Even as a teenager Gen Z millennial, you can still find your purpose.

Dhruvik Parikh: 48:03  I think another thing that I think I would like to add on is that we talked a little bit about how other generations view Millennials or Gen Z, maybe a little bit negatively. And I think that even when you have your why like that, that doesn't just go away like there are going to be like people who come along your way that maybe are doubting you or are telling you that you can't do what you want to do. But in order to realize your why, you have to stick with it. And don't let other people waiver you from your goals. Because like that's when you know what you want to do, there's really like no beating around the bush, that's what you got to do.

Mark Perez: 48:51  I'll leave it with this. When I was in Los Angeles this past weekend, the trainer, Houston, he kind of sat me down and he goes, "Mark, I want you to remember this." And he sits me down in his backyard and I just... He looked me in the eye and he goes, "I want you to remember this for the rest of your life." And then he goes, "Better happens daily." And he goes, "And it doesn't necessarily mean every day, something good to happen to you. It means better things happen on the daily. And just because it's not to you doesn't mean things are getting better. But when you leave this weekend to go home, I want you to keep that in mind. Better happens daily."
Rilee Louangphakdy: 49:29 Wow. Do we end this off? Well, there you have it. You've been listening to Check It Out podcast. You've been listening to four, five TEDx speakers talk about what Gen Z and Millennials should be doing one thing that we all want you to know which I'm just throwing this out there is know your why. And whether you're young or old, experienced or unexperienced, we all think that you have credibility and reason to say what you say and do what you do. Thanks for being here. And this conversation has been awesome.

Harshu Musunuri: 50:03 Thank you for having us.

Ken Harvey: 50:06 We love hearing from our listeners and subscribers, especially if you enjoyed a guest or have a suggestion for a future topic. Drop us a line at Check It Out podcast at sno-isle.org. Again, that's Check It Out podcast at sno-isle.org. And let us know what you're thinking. Don't be surprised if we read your comment or answer your question on a future podcast episode.

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Ken Harvey: 50:48 If you enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe so you can receive every episode automatically. And until next time, remember your library has a lot to offer you. So what are you waiting for? Check It Out!