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A message for anyone considering a Patrick Reynolds Presentation:

I'm the faculty advisor for Northern Michigan University's Health Promotion Society student group. We were looking for a BIG health promotion project for them to do for our campus and surrounding community. Past projects have included bringing in well-known speakers in the field of health and wellness so we started to brainstorm ideas for speakers. Since NMU was in the process of debating the adoption of a Tobacco-Free policy, there was discussion of having a high profile speaker on the issue of tobacco use. The group's co-advisor and NMU's Health Promotion Specialist, Lenny Shible, mentioned hearing about the "grandson of RJ Reynolds speaking out against his family's business". The students thought that would be a VERY cool thing so we did some research and liked what we saw online. The videos on the site Tobacco-Free.Org illustrated the ability of Patrick Reynolds to speak to varied audiences, craft very convincing anti-tobacco ads and to appear in the media handling their confrontation with facts, figures, forcefulness AND respect. After a few e-mails and messages were exchanged to get details, I had a conversation with him.

In my 40+ years in this field, this man was one of the most immediately engaging, personable, accommodating and constructively "mission-passionate" professional that I have ever encountered. As our students and I worked diligently in the background to secure funding and make arrangements, he continually made helpful suggestions to assist with the process. His suggestions would be VERY helpful to anyone who hadn't been through the process of securing a speaker and he repeatedly complimented us on our handling of the process. He also worked with us to gather information to customize his presentation with data specific to our state and audience. His fees and contractual demands were VERY reasonable and he was willing to work with us to make it happen.

In the meantime, our administration DID make the decision for our campus to become Tobacco-Free as of August 1, 2014 and momentum gathered for a "kick-off" presentation. Tobacco Wars was a perfect fit!

With this additional incentive to get involved, other student organizations joined in, as well as other departments on campus and community substance abuse and health innovation groups. As we gathered more sponsorship partners, the single event originally planned turned into a multiple venue marathon and Patrick's message to us remained "bring it on".

He only asked for a little downtime to “recharge” between the youth and the evening events and we soon saw why. The man is a dynamo. His energy, stage presence, clarity of message and desire to connect with the audience is phenomenal. We could see from the moment he stepped off the plane that he has a gift for engaging with everyone he meets. He shows genuine interest in people, answering and asking questions to connect with them. From the dinner with our University student groups’ representatives to breakfast with our school officials to a presentation to an audience of 600 middle and high school students to interviews with the media to a presentation to the general public to a presentation for our athletes, we saw neither his energy nor enthusiasm falter. His delivery is clear, POWERFUL and his visual aids effective in bringing points to life for the audience. He is equally comfortable speaking to someone across the table or in a gym filled with hundreds of people.

It is obvious to me that his impact goes FAR beyond the anti-tobacco theme and strikes a MUCH deeper chord with people. He touches nerves as well as hearts and can help people in the process. One student took his advice to seek help for heavy emotional loads that don’t have to be carried alone and was overwhelmed with the support she received. Our students’ reflections mentioned outrage at the tobacco companies’ manipulation, empathy with his family issues, appreciation for encouragement to speak up for positive behaviors, difficulties in their own lives and challenges to Patrick for future presentations. In a world where the pace of life can make young people feel insignificant, he gave them the gift of time and attention. He gave an extensive interview to young reporters for our teen newspaper page and even stopped to write a note for a student who wanted help carrying his words home to her mom. The man obviously cares about how his message affects his audience, not just about his performance.

Patrick Reynolds is helping us fight the good fight against a substance that remains the leading cause of preventable illness and death in our country and is spreading exponentially to the rest of the world. He is an asset to us all in the field of Health Promotion and someone I’m fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with.

Would I recommend the experience of a Patrick Reynolds presentation? Absolutely!

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