**HFNT #18: Helping Hands**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

Scott: Happy Friday, North Texas. I'm Scott.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: Today is Friday, January 31st. And we've got some inspiring interviews lined up today, folks.

Alicia: That's right. We've got an interview with Keylen Davis, president of the ADA Epsilon chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, talking about his fraternity's connection to Martin Luther King Jr., and the significance of Black History Month starting tomorrow. We've also got an interview with a first-generation alumna who now works at UNT and helped launch the First Generation Success Center to help other first-gen students. And lastly, we've got a story about how a little Mean Green pride led to some life-saving heroics.

Scott: That all sounds great, Alicia. But first, we've got to catch up.

Alicia: Scotty.

Scott: What's up, Alicia?

Alicia: We are right in the thick of Mean Green basketball season, and both teams have been absolutely dominating in Denton. The women are an impressive 11 and one at home, and the men are undefeated at the Super Pit with a perfect 11-0 record. I hear you got to witness a couple of those wins firsthand.

Scott: That's right. They had a special ticket offer for faculty and staff last week. If you bought tickets to the Wednesday night game, you got free tickets to the Sunday afternoon game. And, you know, I can't say no to such affordable family fun.

Alicia: You really can't get those kiddos started early as Mean Green fans.

Scott: That's right. For both games, we got to campus early and grab some food at Eagle Landing before heading over to the Super Pit and the kids had a blast. We especially enjoyed the baby race at halftime of Sunday's game, and my daughter played Rock, Paper, Scissors with Scrappy.

Alicia: Well, isn't that adorable? Love that your kids are going to have some core memories of those special moments on campus. Tell us about the event you covered on Martin Luther King Jr. Day a couple of weeks ago.

Scott: Yeah. So, on a day when most people were sleeping in and relaxing on their day off, you and students gathered in subfreezing temperatures for a march of remembrance hosted by the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity’s Eta Epsilon chapter. It was a ten-minute march to the Martin Luther King Jr. Rec Center in Denton, where the city hosted a celebration program full of singing, dancing and prayer. Eta Epsilon Chapter, President Keylen Davis spoke about his fraternity's connection to Dr. King and honoring his legacy. I caught up with Keylen to talk about all that and the significance of Black History Month, which starts tomorrow.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: All right, Keylen, so first of all, thank you for joining us for the podcast today. I really appreciate it.

Davis: Thanks for having me.

Scott: I want to start out talking about your fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, and what made you want to join my fraternity?

Davis: My fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, was developed December 4th, 1906, at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. And the reason I want to join is just because of the man I seen growing up. I was around Alpha men, and they was wearing suits. They was always the leaders in a room. Every time they talked, everyone listened. And, while growing up, that just really inspired me to do it once I got older.

Scott: Nice. And then, once you did join, what made you want to run for president of the Eta Epsilon chapter?

Davis: So, I've been president of a lot of orgs and I felt like I could step up and meet this challenge of being president. But, once I got, became an Alpha, I realized that I really want to do this, and I really wanted to be in charge of putting together events, putting together community service. And, I think so far, I've been doing a pretty good job. So, yeah, that was my decision to become president of the chapter.

Scott: Nice. And talk about the fraternity’s connection to Martin Luther King Jr. and how you all tried to honor that with that March of Remembrance that we had this week.

Davis: For the ones that don't know, Martin Luther King Jr. is an Alpha and we try to honor his legacy by continuing to be in our communities uplifting young men. Also, with one of our programs, we encourage young men to go to high school, go to college, and we got that from him because we want people, we want young men to grow up and just don't feel like they're stuck. We want them to feel like they have options. So, we feel like them going to school, know, making a career, them doing something great with their life is them having an option.

Scott: You mentioned seeing Alphas in suits when you were growing up. I couldn't help but notice out at the march it was super cold, but y'all were in your suits. You weren't as bundled up as everybody else, but y’all looked good. What's, why is that so important?

Davis: It looks good. And also, like, it’s a statement, basically. We’re wearing suits, it’s almost 20 degrees, and we still got suits on. No gloves, no other clothes, no hats, no beanies, no anything. And it's just a statement that we're strong men, we're proud, we're powerful men, we're in the front, we're leading, we got suits on. Everybody behind us following is just. It’s just a statement.

Scott: So, as we're coming off of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we're going into Black History Month here in February. Do you have any activities or programing going on for Black History Month?

Davis: Right now, we're in the works of programing and making events. We have an event coming up with ASO, which is the African Student Organization on campus, and we're planning a combined event with them. We haven't got the full layout of it yet, but we're, it’s in the works right now.

Scott: Generally speaking, what does Black History Month mean to you? Like the significance of it?

Davis: Black History Month to me symbolizes celebrating African-American people. All the accomplishments, all the backlash, everything they went through. It's just a month that we can celebrate everything that doesn't happen and how far we came as people, as a community, as even a nation or world, like how close we became. So, I believe that Black History Month for me is just celebrating.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Love hearing about our students getting involved and giving back to the community.

Scott: Yeah, it was really inspiring to get to see the march and the celebration program, and with Black History Month starting tomorrow, UNT has a few events going on throughout the month to help students learn and celebrate. Check the link in the show notes to learn more about those plans.

Alicia: And, speaking of inspiring, tell us about your next interview, Scootle.

Scott: I spoke to Desiree Padron, director of UNT Center for Belonging and Engagement and former director of the First-Generation Success Center. Desiree is a UNT alumna and was a first-generation student herself. So, I spoke to her about the center's mission and what it means to her to help the next generation of first-gen students.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: I guess kind of just broadly can tell me, like, what the mission or purpose of the First- Generation Success Center is.

Padron: For all intents and purposes, the First-Generation Success Center was a center that was created to support first-generation college students as they navigate campus life at UNT. That can address a wide variety of challenges that they may experience, such as difficulties with financial aid, access to financial resources, and, you know, navigating, navigating just general, the academic process. We talk to students about continuing education opportunities, so graduate school, certification programs, engagement, finding community on campus as well. We also talk to students about, you know, just general terminology that we find on college campuses that they may not be familiar with. We like to say it's like a one-stop shop for students who may have questions, whether it's first-gen related or not, whether we can address, you know, their concern or get them connected with individuals that can help them succeed. So, our approach is very holistic with supporting students and making sure that they're supported and guided with care.

Scott: Yeah. And can you talk a little bit about, I know I saw the statistic that UNT’s student population is like 41% first-generation students. Talk about why it's so important to give them that support as opposed to students who have family who have already been through the college process.

Padron: Yeah. So, I think our new stats, I think we're at 42 or 43. But it's wildly important to kind of have this emphasis for first-generation students because sometimes, you know, students may, you know, may lack the skills on how to navigate the college process and family members might not be able to guide them as well. What we talk to, when we talk to students, a lot of times we preface it with you don't know what you don't know and you're having to make decisions. And, sometimes, these are life-lasting decisions based on information that you don't know. You might not have the financial literacy, the career literacy to navigate what this is and to connect resources to help you achieve your goals. First-generation students again, with their specific challenges, they just need that additional support. You know, process of going to a college campus can be very overwhelming. A lot of times, first-generation students may also have that additional stress to make the right decisions, not to fail. Sometimes they're hesitant to disclose, you know, some of their challenges with their family members because they don't want to disappoint them. So, it's complex. No student is the same when it comes to first-generation students. But it is important that first-generation students are given that specific guidance. It's also wildly important to identify and celebrate first generation students as first-gen students. When I was a student at UNT, as a first-gen student, there wasn't as much promotion and celebration of the first an identity. And so, in the past, students would shy away with disclosing that they’re first-gen because it was sometimes considered that you lacked something. Now, with what we're trying to do on campus of the university with the celebration of the first-gen identity, is to change that mindset to more of an empowerment. So, yes, I am first-gen, I may have additional needs or I may need some, you know, additional guidance to navigate certain things, but it's even more exciting that I'm doing this. It's even more inspiring that I have been able to navigate this process and then, you know, complete it with graduation.

Scott: As a first-generation student yourself, can you talk a little bit about kind of how close that mission is to your heart and, you know, being able to do that for other first-gen students?

Padron: Oh, yeah. It's definitely close to my heart being first-gen. When I was growing up, my parents said that, `We'll, we'll support you with whatever you want to do academically will absolutely support you. But you're going to have to try to figure this out on your own because we don't know how to do it. We don't know how to help you.’ Luckily enough, I was a part of a pre-college mentoring program called Trio Upward Bound, and they gave me intensive support in order to, like, help with that transition from high school and to college, connecting with mentors, helping me fill out my financial aid applications. I was a really bright student. I was also independent, but even with where I was academically, I needed a lot of help and a lot of support. So, I also know that, you know, sometimes when you don't have access or information on how to navigate systems or what opportunities are available, you miss out. And you might have, you might have been a perfect candidate for an opportunity, or you may have been the right person to apply for a scholarship, but you just don't know. So, for me as a first-gen, that's why I take it to heart so much, because I see and I work with our students that have so much potential and they have so much to give and so much to share. And they have these amazing reasons behind their goals of being here. And all they need is, is a community. All they need is access. All they need is someone to sit down with them and maybe take a little time to review a policy or a process or to ask a question across campus and help, you know, turn that information into something a little bit more digestible and they'll be fine. I've seen what happens when students don't have that support or they don't have those intervention services. And it's, it can be life-changing. Students come for a reason, and it's really sad that they leave for a wide variety of reasons. And I'm just happy that, you know, we exist to help, help with that.

Scott: You know, you mentioned changing kind of the view of the first-gen status to a point of pride and empowerment. And I know the First-Gen Center provides a lot of workshops and one-on-one sessions. But talk about the importance of building that community and, you know, the value of even just connecting the students with each other.

Padron: Yeah. I think what the value of it is, is sometimes being here can be a little isolating, especially if you're unfamiliar with what the college experience is, and being able to share this experience with others that are feeling the same way or going through the same challenges and you're doing this as a group is really helpful. We have a program called First- Generation Experience, and it is a one-day bridge-type program where students and their families will come to campus and we'll center in on what the first-gen identity is. We send them a registration form prior to the event and in the registration form we ask them if they can give a little bit more insight as to the topics or themes that they're needing more support in. And, to our surprise, which is also not surprising, I guess in a sense, it was overwhelmingly making friends, building connections, that sense of wanting to be around people that know what it's like to be first-gen and creating that community. Kind of again, referencing my own experience, first-gen wasn't celebrated and promoted on such a large scale that it is now, and it's, again, empowering to know that there's a community and also that there's a university that fully supports and celebrates that, too. I think students, when they look at UNT or they look at the First-Gen Center know that, like, first-gen students are welcomed, that our staff members here want to support them. Disclosing that you’re first- gen, which our team always advises our students to disclose if that's something that they're comfortable with, it's their choice, may help other staff members and team members get a little bit more insight, some more, some additional questions to ask them when trying to provide support.

Scott: I think those are all my questions for the First-Gen Center. Is there something I didn't cover or anything else you'd like to say about it?

Padron: I think that the First-Gen Center is like a unique department on campus. It's definitely very welcoming. It's open to all students, which I think sometimes students are unfamiliar with. So, all students, regardless of first-gen status, are welcome to use the center. There is a lot of intentionality with the programing to address the first-gen identity and the needs of our first-gen students. I think another emphasis for the First-Gen Center is not only are we wanting to support students while they are students on campus, we want to provide them with skills and support that will be long-lasting even after graduation. So, it's not just transactional, it's developmental, it's mentoring. It's definitely a pour-in approach to supporting the students. One of the things, a couple of programs that I definitely would love to highlight if possible. We do have First-Gen celebration week. We have our First-Gen Career Week, which is just career initiative specifically for first-gen students. But I think another thing that's really cool about our center is we have a First-Generation Graduation Stole program, where students can earn a graduation stole by completing some form of either professional development or financial literacy programing. It also includes programing related to graduate school. Normally, the sessions are anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. We have a lot of variety with what the students can do, but we've seen that program grow pretty significantly. I think our last, this past fall, we had over three 300 students complete programs. And then, spring, it's usually around just under 500 or a little bit more than that. I am super excited about that program and that it's doing so well is because not only were we able to provide students with regalia that designate their first-gen status and the milestone of what it is to be a first-gen student graduating, but also, like, it has an educational component, too. So, sometimes when we meet with our students, it's like, `Is there any other question that you have before graduation?’ And sometimes our students are like, `Yeah, I actually do.’ And so, we catch them. And it's, again, that emphasis for continuing develop, continuing to develop them even beyond graduation. So, just a program that I wanted to like shout out because I, I just love it so much.

Scott: Absolutely is. Aside from the center itself, is there any one particular, like, resource or anything that you have found you end up pointing first-gen students to a lot? So, anything in financial aid or anything like that?

Padron: Definitely. I don't think it's necessarily like one particular resource, but I think it's showing students when you connect them to resources, the network of support. So, we absolutely send students to Financial Aid. Financial Aid has been very supportive with our questions as well because they know that we're, you know, maybe we're assisting students that their understanding of how to navigate financial aid maybe at Step One. So, they've been very supportive of that. We connect students with the Learning Center. We connect students a lot with our Career Center. There are other first-gen initiatives on campus. So, for example, the Career Center, they have a First-Gen Mean Green Mentors section on the main Mean Green Mentors platform. College of Business has a First in Business program for incoming business majors. There's also the TRIO program. So, we have a very small team with the first-gen center, so there's a lot of work being done with a small staff, but we also know that there are students that might need more of that intensive one-on-one engagement. So, we connect students with our TRIO support services program. Depending on other identities of the student, we might connect them to offices that may better suit their needs in an intensive way. So, for example, if they're a first-gen student but they're also a veteran, connecting them with the student Veteran Services Center, or just looking for opportunities that would meet their needs. I would say that campus has been really receptive to supporting first-gen students. There are some departments that will ask for training for their faculty members and their team members on what it's like to support first-gen students. They look into that to developing their own platforms to help support first- gen student. So, within these last couple of years, I've seen a huge push for the redesign to support first-gen students in various ways across campus.

Scott: All right. And so, Desiree, you know, we talked about the importance of community. And, you know, we think about that a lot in a peer-to-peer sense. But talk about, is there a mentoring capacity to this as well?

Padron: Yeah. So, as I mentioned with a couple of our programs, it's all about connecting students to resources and then also people on campus, and that can be faculty, staff, but then also mentors, in particular peer mentors, where I think students have the greatest advantage to start building that community. And we work really closely with our Access Mentoring program. It's with the orientation and transition programs. Access Mentoring allows students to meet with a peer mentor over the course of their first year. Our data shows that on average, our first-gen students who meet with a peer mentor at least four times their first year are very successful in transitioning to the, to their second year. So, we always want to try to get students connected to mentoring and helps to build that community. You can, you know, be vulnerable with your peer mentor about what you're experiencing, and they will always provide you with different resources, different methods to coach you through success. So, we like to get our students connected with mentoring programs and, you know, always starting with our Access Mentoring program that we have on campus.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Man, talk about paying it forward. That's one of the best things about working at UNT. You know that the work you're doing plays a part in people changing their lives with the college education. You love to see it.

Scott: Absolutely. And, for our alumni listeners, if you want to read more inspirational stories about first-generation alumni, be sure to check out the cover story of the Spring *North Texan* hitting mailboxes at the end of March. We'll also have a link in the show notes if you want to learn more about the First-Generation Success Center. Alicia, tell us about our final interview.

Alicia: Of course. Up next, we've got the unbelievable story of Ben Roth, two-time alumni, Plano firefighter, paramedic and husband of UNT swimming and diving coach Brittany Roth. Ben is a Detroit Lions fan and happened to be attending a game in Chicago with his daughter last December when he spotted a young fan in a UNT shirt. Ben hit him with a `Go, Mean Green,’ and chatted up the boy and his uncle, who happened to have extra field passes for the game, which he offered to the Ross. While down on the field before the game, another fan collapsed and Ben's first-responder instincts kicked in and he leapt into action. Although the man later died at the hospital, Ben was able to resuscitate him and give him a few more precious hours with his family. Our very own Jessica DeLeon caught up with Ben and Brittany to get all the details about this incredible story.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Jessica: It seems like a coincidence, but to me, it seems like fate almost, too. But can you start? I mean, you were at the Detroit Lions game and you saw somebody with the UNT t-shirt, right?

Ben: Yeah. So, we, as you can tell, Brittany and I live in Texas. I've been a Detroit Lions fan for 35 years, and we have season tickets. Between her schedule as the head coach at UNT for swim and diving, and mine as a firefighter, we only make it to about four or five games a year working around our schedules. And so, we were going up to visit Brittany's family for the holidays, preplanned and everything, and we decided to stop off and see her friends who live in Chicago. It happened to be the Lions and she and Bears were playing that same weekend. And so, we're like, `Yeah, let's go.’ Brittany doesn't do cold weather games after I've taken her to too many cold weather games. And so, what we did is, we talked about taking our daughter Isadora, just myself and her. I've taken her two now to game. She's actually going to go with me this weekend to the playoff game. Just bring her Izzy and I, because Brittany’s team is facing off against Iowa State. And so. it'll be Izzy's and I’s third trip together. But we ended up getting really, really cheap tickets because the Bears’ season wasn't going as well. And the tickets I got happen to be give us access to the United Club. That was important because it's, Chicago is cold, it's an outdoor stadium. And, if Izzy got too cold, I wanted to make sure she could, you know, be in a warm area. So, what ended up happening is, the seats were as close to the field as possible. I mean, they were very nice seats. You had to show credentials to get there. And then, they gave you a different credential to go back in and out. And, as we're standing there, I see a tall guy. And at first, I thought it was his son. And I'm like, `My gosh, he's wearing a North Texas sweatshirt.’ And so, I yelled, `Go, Mean Green,’ since Brittany works there. And then, I actually while Brittany’s been working there, I got my bachelor's and master’s through UNT as well. And they yelled back and I said, `Hey, can I take a picture of your son?’ I was like, ‘cause, you know, you're not just going to randomly take a picture a kid, at least I'm not going to. And he's like, `Yeah, that's fine.’ And then, he asked the security guards if he could come over a little closer because they were kind of partitioned off. And so, he walked over and I took a better picture with Isadora and him, and I said, `Hey, thanks. I appreciate it. You know, it’s not often you see Mean Green sweatshirt in Chicago, Illinois, at a Bears game.’ And so, he went back over to his, later learned it was his uncle, and I told him that, you know, my wife is the swimming and diving coach at North Texas, which I told him, and they had two extra passes. So, they're like, `Hey, my uncle said, if you want to come down, I've got two extra pass, he’s got a two extra passes because my mom got sick so she couldn't come with us today.’ And so I was like, `Oh, cool. That's awesome.’ And so, they directed us how to get there. And we walked around and got up to where they were standing at, introduced themselves. I'm like, `How are how did this come about?’And he was like, `Well, I actually live in Texas. I'm up visiting my family. He lives here.’ And he's like, `We want to, you know, I'm a recent girl dad. So, I was like, that was kind of cool, you went to North Texas. And then, with you being a girl, dad, like, hey, let's get you on the field with us for a little bit.’ And so, we had exchanged numbers since we live in Texas and about the same age, and he had moved Isadora and his nephew up to the front, so that way if Dan Campbell came by like, hey, we could see. Dan Campbell's the head coach of the Detroit Lions and is one of Brittany's favorite people, along with myself, we’re Dan Campbell fans. And after about 4 or 5 minutes of talking, the gentleman fell down and that's when everything started to happen.

Jessica: You're a firefighter and paramedic, of course. I assume it was just your natural instinct to go to him.

Ben: Yeah, Yeah. So, I’ve been a firefighter-paramedic for about 17 years. I've also worked at a children's hospital for 12 years. So, I mean, I've done CPR, I've done … any time somebody has an incident, like, I always try to help out. I've been in a restaurant where people have fallen down. I’ll go check on them and stuff like that. I went over to him and the state troopers for the state of Illinois were there, too. And they're like, `Hey, I think he's having a seizure.’ I'm like, `Hey, I'm a paramedic. Let me help out.’ And they’re, like, `All right.’ And they're like, `I think he's having a seizure.’ Well, he wasn't having a seizure. He was having what we call a cardiac seizure. To a person that's not medically trained or is not familiar with it, it's basically the head kind of looks like it's seizing because the brain started to not get oxygen pumped to it. And so, it's right before you go into cardiac arrest. And so, I recognized that and said, `Hey, when you start CPR.’ They're like, `He's breathing.’ I go, `He’s going to stop breathing here in a second.’ And I said, `Give me an AED’. And they're like, `What?’ I was like, `Give me an AED,’ And I pointed at two separate people, and they both went in different directions. And, right when I say, `Give me AED,’ he lost his pulse. So, I started compressions. I was like, `Hey, I need you to take over compressions.; And I looked at another guy. I was like, `Hey, can you keep track of time for me? Because we need, I don't know how long we're having you compressions.’ And so, it luckily wasn't very long because they could, both the staff members came back with AEDs and we were, we're able to get it placed on him. So, once he got them placed on him, the AED, the great thing about an AED is that anybody can use it with the right training, but it recognized that he was in an unorganized rhythm that way. It will shock him out of it. And once we shocked him out of it, he came to and when he came to, I was like, `Hey, continue CPR.’ `Well, he's still moving.’ I was like, `Well, the problem with that is,’ I was like, `They can go right back into cardiac arrest.’ I go, `Keep doing CPR just for a little longer,’ because what we wanted to make sure what we were doing was circulating oxygenated blood, because your body has oxygenated blood in it at all times. And, the longer you can do compressions to make sure the brain, organs and everything are not going without oxygen, the better. After about a minute more CPR, he was answering questions and talking and starting to come back to.

Jessica: And so, he was able to go to the hospital. I know his son was able to spend at least 4 to 5 hours before he passed away. And the son, is I'm sorry, Jeremy.

Ben: Yeah. And so, his his boss, Denver, was actually on the sidelines with us. So Denver, Wally and Jeremy and some other coworkers of Denver and Jeremy's were on the field, and so Denver stayed. And then, Jeremy went with his dad to the hospital. And, as you know, Wally was leaving for the hospital, he joked with the paramedics, he goes, `Well, I haven't left the Bears’ field in a while smiling.’ And they're like, with me. And, and he goes, `Well, they always lose. And I guess, like, they just told me I had a heart attack or something.’ And he goes, `So I'm smiling about, you know.’ So, he got to the hospital. His wife met them up there. His son stayed with them the whole time. And they were joking in the hospital, all talking about like, you know, they got all these extra tasks because they're trying to figure out, like, `Do we have a blockage? Do we need to do ECMO tomorrow? Do we need to do a stent? Do we need to do open-heart surgery? Like what do we need to do?’ And the hospital they went to is a very strong cardiac capability hospital. Any hospital has ECMO is one of the, is considered a really, really good hospital because it's basically taking your heart outside of the body or rerouting all the valves around the body or the heart, to pump oxygenated blood for the organs so the heart can heal, so you can do other procedures and stuff like that. And so, once they figured out that that that's what they needed, they kind of talk to the family and were like, `This is what we're looking at. You know, we've got a lot of things going on right now. This is going to be pretty emergent.’ And so, they were able to kind of say their goodbyes, ended up intubated him for surgery because it's, you know, potential. They need to keep the airway open and whatnot. And so, the son later able to tell in a second article through the Detroit Free Press, about how he got to spend quality time with his dad and that like, he didn't die alone and that he wasn't, he was tired, but he wasn't like in pain, or at least he wasn't showing he's in pain. And so they actually got like 4 to 5 quality hours that they got to spend them because we're able to successfully get his heart started back on the field.

Jessica: How do you find out about that, too?

Ben: So, they just I had exchanged numbers with his, his boss who was texting me throughout the game, like, `Hey, he's at the hospital. He's even joking around the hospital that some of you on the Bears game on.’ He's like, `No, that has already caused me enough trouble today.’ Like, they said he was, he was his personality was exactly what it was. He was just tired, which makes sense, you know, since he had just gone through a major incident. And so, they kept texting me. And then, later that night, I got a text from while his wife that although he didn't survive the surgery, they were so thankful that they got that extra time and really just was so happy that I was there to help out. And I told them, I was like, `You know, it wasn't just me. It was the Bear’s staff that was able to get the AED so quickly. It was the Illinois State Troopers that were doing great CPR.’ It was a collaborative effort of, you know, in a just a very, very random situation.

Jessica: Yeah. It sounds like, I’m trying not to cry right now, too, because it's so like touching. But I'm sure this is, like, the reason why you got into your job, too. Yeah, that's like you're a superhero, you know?

Ben: Well, that's. I mean, it's more of a just it's a profession. Like firefighters, police officers, a lot of times they get, you know, criticized because, like, `Why didn't you do this right?’ And you, that, and like, we are, we get into the profession to help people. And, a lot of times, you know, there are parts of the story that people don't see. So if you don't know what the correct thing is, people, like, make assumptions in any situation, you know, and that could be in any aspect of life. So, like with police and firefighters, what we like to do is, you know, we want to help people. And, in that situation, we all came together to help attempt, to help somebody. And although it wasn't him walking to the hospital, it was, you know, over 300 minutes or 300 minutes of quality time with their family that like they wouldn't have got back. And so, it's disappointing for not working out. But, at the same time, once your heart stops, I mean, anything after that is a blessing. And that's how the family viewed it. And it took me a little bit because, you know, I was texting Britanny while I was at the game. I'm like, `Hey, I’ve got a lot to tell you. It's got to be in person, but I'm probably going to be on the news. And, because, I just got interviewed by a reporter and this happened.’ She was like, `What?’ I was like, `We're OK. I’ll just I'll just tell you that we're going to stay at the game. Hopefully the Lions win. But there's something really special that might have happened,’ so ....

Jessica: Brittany, what was your reaction as you saw the text?

Brittany: You know that emoji that has the big, wide eyes and the like shock face? That, that's all I sent back up because as he mentioned, he took our sixyear old to the game and Ben is an avid picture taker whenever we go and do events as a family. And so, I was surprised. You know, I was sitting back at the nice, warm house because, as Ben said, like as soon as he was like, `I'm going to go to the Bears game,’ he like, he knew not to ask me because he as he said, he has taking me to too many cold weather games. So, I'm like, `No, thank you. I will sit at a warm house with my best friend and you know, you guys have fun.’ And so, I was surprised that there was like an hour before the game, 45 minutes before the game, half an hour before the game. And I'm like, `I don't have any word from Ben. And so, I just reached out and I was like, How is it going?’ And he responded with, `I just did CPR on the field and saved a man's life. I'm going to be on the news. I'll tell you later.’ And that and we just sat there and we watched the game on TV. Just wondering like what happened. And when he got back to the house, it was you know, it was such a wild, wild story. And it, it very much felt like right place, right time. You know, Ben and I, we weren't supposed to be in Chicago that weekend. Initially, my best friend was like, `I'm so sorry. We're hosting, you know, for the holidays. We, we don't really have room available. Like, we'd love to see you guys, but unfortunately, with the holidays, like, we can't.’ But then a couple of weeks before Christmas, she reached out and was like, `Actually, we'd love to have you guys.’ So, it was kind of a last-minute, `OK, we'll go to Chicago.’ You know, Ben was, you know, trying to get me to go to the game. He was like, `I'll take a friend. I can take anybody else.’ But he ended up taking our six year old and then, you know that the man on the field with his nephew, `You were saying we were looking for a dad who brought his daughter.’ So, like, it had to be. It had to be them. We had to be in Chicago. We had to be there. The kid had to be wearing a UNT shirt. You know, everything very much in hindsight as we look at it, it's like everything had to align the way that it did for Ben to be at that place in time, in that particular moment for that family.

Jessica: Ben, you mentioned this, too, and one of the articles, that it sounds like you are very religious and that you it was meant to happen, right?

Ben: Yeah. Yeah. I believe in God and our family does as well. And it's one of those things that like, you know, I don't try to tell people what to believe in or how to act. But in the aspect of, you know, if you're on the fence about religion or faith, you know, there's a lot of reason why people have reservations. I am like, this is one of those situations where it's like, if the kid would have worn a different sweatshirt, if we would have sat in a different seat, if we wouldn't have if anyone chose to go to the game, if my friend who hadn't made plans with to for a big for his wife. Like, he was like, when I told him the price of the ticket, he's like, `Man, I’ll pay for both of our tickets because they're that cheap.’ He's like, `That's awesome.’ And he's like, `I really want to go. Let me let me think about it.’ He's like, `No, I can't. I can't bail on my wife's Christmas prizes. That would be terrible.’ I mean, it's just. And then her best friend's husband, Britney’s, he's like, `I'm down with the Bears this year. I'm not going in the cold weather like, I'd rather just not.’ Like, there was just so many things that had to, like, happen and then walking over to get to the spot, like, we had to be delayed just the right amount of time. Where he got his field passes needed to be on the north end zone as opposed to the south end zone. Like, and later talking with the family, they're like, `Yeah, we actually saw your firefighter helmet. We were walking right behind you, the whole way in and so we had seen it. I was like, that's cool helmet, you know?’ And then they said it was just and then where we're standing. I mean, he was ten feet away where he fell behind me. And then, just the I guess I tell people, like from their religious or the faith aspect or, you know, whatever deity you believe in, it's like, or don't believe in. It's like there are signs all around us and all those things kind of had to line up perfectly to have right place, right time, situation.

Jessica: So, I understand that. I know you have season tickets, but I understand you were invited back for a Detroit Lions game, right?

Ben: Yeah. So, we originally weren’t going to go to the game. Like I said, once the Lions made the playoffs, I wanted to go to the game. But since we do have to pay for airfare and hotel and all three of us go, my daughter's been to probably more NFL games than most adults have. And she gets really into it, like she's really big into numbers where she can tell you scores of the game. Like, she, she knows what's going on. She played like football. She's playing basketball. I mean, she, she really gets in the sports and it's obvious with my background in sports, Britney's background in sports that she's going to be, you know, heavily involved in sports just from either a fan perspective or an athlete perspective. And so, I actually had my tickets sold for that game. And so, the Lions reached out, my ticket agent did the very next day, and I was like, `Hey, how are you doing?’ I was like, `Man, I'm struggling a little bit because I've got all these reporters calling me.’ I was like, `My phone. I go just the last like 20. I've had 20 different reporters call me, text me on LinkedIn, text me on Facebook. They're calling my mom, they're calling Britney. Yeah. My brother, who was visiting, on vacation with his wife in Japan, he got a phone call, and it was 1:30 there.’ So, like, there was a lot going on. And so, my ticket agent was like, `Hey, we just, to, he's like, well, why do you pick up for me?’ And I'm like, `Well, I know you. So, I'm like, I know what you're probably calling about.’ And he's like, `Yeah. He's like, man, we just want to tell you what a great job and everything like that.’ ago. We know you sold your tickets. Go ahead. If you if you want, we'd like to bring you out for a game. We'd like to bring you out for the playoffs, but since this game against the Vikings is so big, we might not get a playoff game. So, if you're OK, I would like to bring you out for the Vikings game.’ And I was like, Yeah, that'd be great. And so originally, Britany didn't think she's going to be able to go because they're coming back from training camp. And I was like, `Well, hey, do you think you get the son to go, because he's actually a Lions fan?’ He's never been to Ford Field and I was like, that might be a cool little not consolation prize for what happened, but just it would be something cool. So we're texting back and forth about it and he texted me on Monday and said, `Hey, I guess I'm gonna see y'all in Detroit.] And I'm like, `What?’ And, and he's like, `Yeah, and let me bring my stepsister and my boss.’ And I was like, `Wow.’ So, and at that time I texted him, I said, `Well, cool.’ And I texted my agent. I said,`I don't know if the offer's still on the table, but Britany can go. But if there's too many people coming, like, I understand. And because once Britany got back, her team was like, `You have to go. Like, we heard about this story. This is so special. Like, you know, it just how it all went down.’ And like, he was really, well, I don't know. North Texas sweatshirt and or like yeah. And so, the Lions ended up flying him, his stepsister and his boss out. And then Isadora, Britany and I out and they put us up in a hotel. They got us all tickets to the game. They got us food passes at this really nice restaurant in the, that you can only get into it in the club section of the at Lions Field. And they're like, `We're gonna let you get some food first and then we're going to take you down to the field.’ And so, they took us down to the field and we had, I mean, the volume of executives. I got to meet Barry Sanders. The cheerleaders gave Isadora authentic cheerleader pom poms. Like, I mean, these things are heavy like that. And the how they were taking pictures. Taylor Lautner and his wife, Tay, were on the sidelines. Drew Brees was on the sidelines. Calvin Johnson said Barry Sanders and we're just talking with everybody and they're like, this is how it's going to go down. We're all going to be allowed to stay on the field through the end, all the way to the kickoff. And I'm like, `What?’ Like, and so we got to be on there for a player intros, the national anthem, the flag ceremony, the coin toss and, then the opening kickoff. And so, that was completely surreal. On top of the fact that, Barry Sanders is why I became a Lions fan. I got to sit there and talk with him for like ten or 15 minutes. That was just surreal. And he just he's exactly the type of person you hope your favorite athlete is. He was just endearing and calm and just really easy to talk to. So that was very surreal and cool moment that came from a negative, essentially.

Jessica: Britany, what was that experience like for you, too?

Britany: I mean, that was it was incredible. I was just really proud of Ben and the way that he was able to navigate all of this, you know, what he does on a daily basis, you know, and the tragedies and the calls that he goes on regularly at work. Like, those are people's the worst days of their lives. And rarely, I don't I don't know if Ben has ever been interviewed about those calls, about being part of that. And so, getting to see, you know, him being recognized for just what he does for other people and the, you know, getting to watch him talk to his childhood hero. I just it was really amazing to just be a witness to that. And, yeah, I'm just really grateful that the Lions gave us an opportunity to have that weekend together and all of those, like, special little moments and getting to see, you know, Ben light up at his favorite players. My daughter lighting up at her favorite players. As Ben mentioned, like, the the Lions cheerleaders came over to her. She always wears a little Lions cheerleading uniform to the games. And, you know, they said, `We thought you needed a pair of pompoms just like us.’ And you know, taking pictures with her. She was just, you know, she's high-fiving the the Lions’ mascot. Rory, you know, for her, that's a big celebrities like society. And, you know, just to have all of those little pockets and those little those moments together as a family, those are those are just so special.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: Man, what an insane series of events to make that all line up. The fact that the Lions happen to be playing the Bears while the Roths were in town. Ben happened to see someone in a UNT t-shirt, and they happened to have extra field passes to put Ben in the right place at the right time. Absolutely love that story. And big thanks to Jessica for bringing us that interview. Be sure to check the show notes for a link to her full story.

Alicia: Yes. Definitely hit up those show notes, people. That story was too good. Scott, It's Q&A time. What do we got today?

Scott: Well, with Valentine's coming up here in just a couple of weeks, our question of the day is, what's your go to spot for a romantic date on campus?

Alicia: I would say a good go-to romantic spot on campus would be the Shrader Pavilion, or what some people know it as the gazebo outside the you UNT Union. The vibes are immaculate no matter what time of day it is. I mean, what's more romantic than a gazebo, Scott? I'm waiting. What about you, Scotty?

Scott: Well, as far as campus goes, I feel like the library mall at night with the fountains going in might be a good little romantic spot. You have some deep conversations under the stars if it's not too cold out. Our student reporter, Anthony Simone, took this question out to campus to get student tips for a perfect date night.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Anthony: So, with Valentine's Day approaching, we're wondering where students would take somebody on a date here on campus. What do you think?

Student 1: OK, well, I am music student and I love just listening to the music that's happening in the Music Building, even when I'm not in classes and stuff like that. So, if I were to take someone on campus on a date, I would love to sit by the Music Building and listen to the music and then talk about what we hear.

Student 2: On campus, I think I'd go to the Art Building. I think it's a very nice, vibey place. It's very quiet in the night, especially very beautiful in the night. I think I would walk around there and then maybe swing around Fry Street if I could.

Student 3: Where we go eat?

Student 4: The dining room?

Student 3: Yeah, the dining hall would be great. It's like, you can get a free meal. If the guy pays, it’s like $10.

Anthony: That's also true.

Student 5: Or how about the the terrace, on the last floor here at the Union? Was it, the fourth floor? The terrace? You could have like a picnic in the terrace, you know, they have like that here. You know, you could see the sunset or whatever. You put a picnic blanket and you bring a picnic basket. I think that would be a good, cute date with the sunset.

Student 4: Yeah. Or even a simple coffee over at Starbucks. But honestly, if it depends on the person you love that much, you really don't care where the where the dates are, right?

Student 3: So long as they tried.

Student 4: Yeah. At least, like they're making, you know, a good impression. Or if they even like the gallery right here, the art gallery here at the Union. Just like a symbol, like, you know, just depends on the person, the person or company.

Student 5: Probably like the little benches, like, behind the library, around the library mall, just like around there.

Anthony: Near like where the rocks are?

Student 5: Yeah. Probably with some food or something. Yeah.

Anthony: Just keep it simple. No coffee or anything?

Student 5: Probably not. Just food.

Anthony: Just good conversation?

Student 5: Yeah.

Student 6: I think I would take them to the Willis Media Library because you’ve got movies, you have video games. You have like, things to do, like activities instead of. Like, I think sitting down and talking is very nice, but I've think doing something on date, especially like Valentine's Day is always, you get the most out of it.

Anthony: More engaging?

Student 6: Yeah.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Well, now that you've heard from us and some students, we want to hear from you. Tell us all about your perfect Denton date plans by emailing us at podcast@unt.edu or calling us at 940-565-4341.

Scott: And remember to tell a friend about the show, share it on social media or leave us a rating and review wherever you listen. Until next time, we hope you have a Happy Friday, North Texas.

Alicia: And go, Mean Green.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: “Happy Friday, North Texas” is a production of the University of North Texas. Today's show was produced and edited by Scott Brown with original reporting by Scott Brown, Jessica DeLeon and Anthony Simone. For more information, visit UNT.edu/podcast.

Alicia: Am I reading the right one?

Scott: Did I send you the wrong script?

Alicia: Yes. It's OK. You got the three and the 0 mixed up. It's OK.

Scott: I'm a little confused.

Alicia: You uncultured swine. That's what they're going to say. Scotty.

Scott: Sorry. I think I was still …

Alicia: Scotty. Scotty. Scott-meister. Scotty.

Scott: It’s so loud.

Alicia: Sorry.

Scott: You’re good.

Alicia: I can back up. Scotty. Scotty. I don't know who's going.

Scott: OK. Real take. Scotty. I'm not going to laugh.

Alicia: Can’t anybody just let us take a W? Put this in the pod.

Scott: It's Texas.

Alicia: Put this in the pod.

Scott: It's Texas.

Alicia: People need to hear this.

Scott: I just realized this script says spoked instead of spoke. That is incorrect.

Alicia: Tsk, tsk.

Scott: Tsk, indeed. For our alumni listeners, if you want to read more inspirational stories about first-generation alumni, be sure to check out the cover story of the Spring North Tixin, hitting mailbox at the end of March. Hitting mailboxes.

Alicia: OK. You're welcome.

Scott: Crushing it.

Alicia: You're welcome. Scott, it's Q&A time. What do we got today? That was so quick. I was so … No, I'll do it again. I'll do it again. OK, I'll do it. OK. OK. I don't want to seem like I'm trying to rush it.