

Daniel Boothe

A happy 2025 fall winter semester to you and welcome to JTalk, Muskegon Community College's official and now award-winning podcast. I am Daniel Booth, co-hosting the operation with me as always, Miss Samantha Kareky, as we welcome you to our latest episode. Coming up on the program today, JTalk welcomes Muskegon Community College's new Provost and Chief Student Services Officer, Dr. Tucker Brown. as he sits down to discuss the new gig here at MCC and his vision for the future. MCC's Center for Theater presents These Shining Lives in November. It's a play about workers at a watch factory back in the 1920s who were subjected to radium poisoning. It's based on a true story, and we have two actors from that production as Lizzie Fritch and Rosie Holshue here to discuss the production and how to get your tickets. and we will round the bases and bring it home with an incredible conversation with current student Christian Fletcher as he shares his heartbreaking and inspirational journey from homelessness to MCC's nursing program. So all coming up, but first, Samantha, a happy fall day to you. How's it going?

Samantha Korecki

It's going great. I am super excited about being award-winning as a podcast.

Daniel Boothe

Award-winning podcast. Yeah, we'll get to that in a little bit. But yeah, it's certainly nice to get that distinction. Samantha, fall, I can't remember. You're a summer girl, right? How do you do in the fall? Do you like the fall?

Samantha Korecki

I am a summer girl, but I also do well with themes. I did some pumpkin painting the other day. I'm all about the fall activities.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, are you all about Halloween? Who are you going as this year?

Samantha Korecki

I think I'm going to do Han Solo and Princess Leia with my boyfriend this year, so that'll be fun.

Daniel Boothe

Are you going into solo?

Samantha Korecki

I've got the hair for it. I'm doing the buns. It's going to be great.

Daniel Boothe

All right, we've got the big guy in the hot seat, so let's get right to it. Are you ready?

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely.

Daniel Boothe

All right, three, two, one.

Samantha Korecki

Welcome to JTalk. All right, our first guest is Dr. Tucker Brown, MCC's new Provost and Chief Student Services Officer. Dr. Brown brings over a decade of progressive leadership experience in higher education, most recently serving as Senior Vice Provost and Associate Vice President at Austin Peay State University, while his dedication to academic excellence and student success in higher education aligns seamlessly with the vision and goals of MCC. An accomplished academic, Dr. Brown has published numerous scholarly articles and delivered over 17 conference presentations. His expertise spans a wide range of topics, with a particular focus on improving the overall student experience. And after not one, but two nationwide searches for our next provost here at MCC, we are so proud and honored to welcome what President Selman called as the greatest vice president candidate in the country, an honor and privilege to welcome new MCC provost, Dr. Tucker Brown, to the podcast.

Daniel Boothe

Welcome to MCC.

Fletch

Good morning. Thanks for having me.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, thanks so much.

Samantha Korecki

Well, first question right out of the gates. What attracted you to MCC in the 1st place?

Fletch

Well, a lot of things. There's obviously a lot to like in West Michigan. We have some family connections actually in the Holland area. So I've spent summers in West Michigan, at least for the last 10 years. My children have actually gone to Tom Mizzo's basketball camps. Oh, yeah. So we have quite a bit of Michigan connection, absolutely. But in terms of the specific position, it's the mission. It's real simple. This is a really easy and excellent mission to get behind. It's student-centric. It has the word kindness in it, right? It's the right place to be, and it's easy to get behind such a mission. At the end of the day, I'm very student-centric. It's my goal to go home at the end of the night and feel like we've done something to help students. And Muskegon Community College is so dedicated to that, and it's palpable. You step on the campus, and you feel it, you taste it, you see it with the staff, the faculty, the students, everybody's here and they know why they're here. And honestly, coming for the interview and touring the campus, I got to see that firsthand. And you have a great president, right? And that's unique. And it was an easy sell for me to really feel like, oh, this is a place that I could be and fit in and hopefully make a difference, impact it. But They're also, it's a well-established college and things are going well. And so there's also this piece for me that is like, yes, this is a mission. This aligns with exactly what I want to do. How do I get here and not screw it up?

Samantha Korecki

How are we feeling about MCC so far? How did it feel to kind of like come on campus, walk the halls for the first time as the new provost?

Fletch

It's amazing. You know, drinking from a fire hose, obviously, but that's part of the plan. I'm trying to attend as many evening events, faculty, staff, students, whatever we have going on, I'm trying to be at all of it. I really want to integrate and be part of the community. Everyone's been incredibly welcoming. So I've been here for five months. It feels like I've been here for a lot longer because of how welcoming everybody is. I feel like I know most people on a first name basis. I'm seeing people in the community at different places, connected with a lot of our supporters and donors in the community. So I really feel like I'm integrating now for sure. And it's been welcoming, so it hasn't been a lot of awkwardness, I guess, at least on my end. I have no idea how everybody else feels. But it's been what feels like a smooth transition, but very, very busy in a good way.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, you know, it's really encouraging to hear because I get the feeling you're a lot like me and you're a lot like Samantha. You're a naturally like friendly person. I try. Yeah, same, same. I'm just a naturally like easygoing guy. I like people. Speaking of people here, you

mentioned our president, Dr. Salman, who I call the hardest working man here on campus. I mean, he truly is a great leader. What has been your experience? working with him as both your boss, as kind of your partner. What has been your take so far working with Dr. Selman.

Fletch

So I've worked with numerous presidents in my career, and they've all been great, right? John's very unique, though. What I would say about President Selman specifically is you tapped the energy piece, right? He's going all the time. He is very plugged in. He has great ideas. He really interfaces with the community and has his ear to the ground on what the students need, what the community needs. The other piece that I've been just incredibly impressed with is the integrity that comes along with John and the kindness, right? He's really committed to the mission. He doesn't waver from the mission. He prioritizes the mission and puts the money where our mouths are. And so I think that's really, really important. Presidents are pulled in a lot of different directions. It's a very political job as well. And I think John does a great job of balancing all those things while still maintaining the focus, which is getting our students to the next thing.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, I would imagine too that has to breed a culture of respect here from top down. And I would imagine you've been to institutions before where leadership may not necessarily be everything that you wish that they were. And then that bleeds down and trickles down and creates a bad war culture, am I right?

Fletch

Absolutely. And I think the big difference too is that, I would say in the most sort of joking way, John's a man of the people, right? I mean, he's walking the halls, he's talking to everybody. Everybody knows him and feels really comfortable approaching him. I've been at bigger institutions. Bigger institutions, the presidents are not always as visible or as accessible, right? And so he's more than just a figurehead. I mean, he's really doing it. And I think that's the piece that at the end of the day, to your point, it drives the whole place, right? That trickles down to everyone. Everyone feels empowered to have conversations, to ask, to advocate for the things that they need for students to be successful. And John listens.

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely. So now shifting into academics, as I said in your bio, you have a particular expertise in improving the overall student experience. When you look at the college landscape and what other colleges are doing across the board right now, what they're

doing right, what they're doing wrong, what are we doing right or wrong here at MCC? And where do you think there are opportunities for us to improve? I know it's a big question, but what have you got?

Fletch

So I mean, it's higher ed, so there's always room to improve. And there's lots of different strategies and approaches. You can't do it all, right? And so I think what's kind of what's unique about Mesquite Community College is they've focused on a few things that they feel like, yeah, we can really do these things well. And I think that's very important. So, you know, I would say our focus on the sort of non-traditional adult student and incorporating navigators into those things, finding funding sources, those things are incredibly impressive. I think, you know, acknowledging just in the most general sense that it's not a one-size-fits-all model or population that we serve. And we do a really good job of looking at all of the sort of stratification within who our student population is and trying to address those things in ways that help move the needle, whether it's graduation, workforce development, onto a four-year school, whatever that might be. I think we're very cognizant of all of the different populations that we have and how to best serve them. So there's, you know, if you look at the accolades that the college has received, we're doing a lot of things really well. Of course, there's always more you can do. As provost, I tend to focus on the stuff that can be improved, right? So of course, we want to get to some things that are not ever going to be attainable, but we're going to try to get to them anyway. We want every student to walk away with a credential, right? We want every student to go on to that next thing, whatever that's going to be. And we want to find ways to make it easier for them, right? So there's things like application processes. And I'm just using that as an example, which is not unique to Muskegon Community College. The whole country does this application process that a lot of us are starting to scratch our heads and wonder, does it have to be so arduous? Is that a barrier? Yeah, right. And so, you know, there's things like that I'm not sure it's necessarily specific to Muskegon Community College, but to the larger higher ed conversation. How do we make it easier for students to access our institutions? And then once they get here, how do we make that seamless transition to the next? thing, right? Those type of things. So, no, there's a lot, there's really a lot we're doing well. There's some low-hanging fruit, I think, structural things that we can look at, how to do, instituting A mandatory midterm grade, little things like that, are not painful to do, but just things that we could do that will help move the needle for student success.

Daniel Boothe

You had mentioned real quick, I want to ask you, because it's an important question, and especially here, me and Samantha both work in the communications and marketing

department. how we structure our bring it out campaigns and who do we target next. Can you describe for our listeners a little bit about the cliff that we're coming? Sure, yeah, The demographic cliff and why it happened. and why it's going to be important to target adult learners coming back to school. Not only from a financial point of view, but also as a true community changer, that there are a lot of people who would truly benefit from that here in this region. Absolutely.

Fletch

So I love that question because at the end of the day, I'm A sociologist, right? And so these are the things that I really like to study, focus on, and sometimes they keep me up at night. The demographic cliff is all three of those things probably. So really what the demographic cliff is, this, it's It's the notion that there will not be as many available high school graduates as we go forward, really starting at the year 2026. And what's created that phenomenon is fertility rates. So fertility rates of people that were getting married or at childbearing age during about 20 years ago, approximately. Their fertility rates are at record lows, but that's not completely unique to the United States. We've seen a downward fertility rate trend since the 70s, really. But it's very pronounced right now. So what that means is the fertility rates are low, and as a result, there are not enough children in the population that we are tipping, I'm not saying enough, but I said the typical base that we drew on in higher education has been reduced. So forever, higher education has been based on this model that we're going to enroll 18-year-olds the day they get out of high school, right? Which was a great model because we were basing that on a 50s model where we had a baby boom and everyone was having approximately 3 1/2 children per family, right? So there were so many. Now our fertility rates are below our placement level, right? Somewhere around 1 or right below 1. So that means all of these colleges and universities that have sprouted up over the last 60 to 70 years, now we're fighting for all the same students. So that impacts all of our admissions processes, enrollment, how we go about getting students, and longer term, there's a financial impact of that as well. How do you keep the lights on if you don't have the same amount of students, right? Because the budget is based on, you know, I'll simplify it, but the budget is based on a 50s model, but we're in 2026 where we don't have the same amount of students. So then all of these other sort of populations and initiatives become really important. One of the things that we know, as working in higher ed, is that there's a lot of adult students, potential adult students, out there that have some college credit, right? For whatever reason, they've detached from the college or university, but they're really strong candidates to just... come back, some of them only need 6 credits, right? One more course, right? So it's about us reconnecting with them and saying, okay, hey, here's where you stand with us. One semester you've got this degree, maybe you're interested in a career change, or maybe this

bumps you to the next phase of your career. Or maybe you just want to come and reacquaint yourself when you're a lifelong learner, whatever it may be. But the state of Michigan is really unique because there's a ton of funding right now for what we call our adult students, adult population, to come back to school and not have an out-of-pocket expense associated with that. Yeah, it really is. So the push, to get to the 60 by 30, which is the state's push to have 60% of our population have some higher ed academic credential, whether it's workforce, traditional college, whatever it might be. The big component of that is how do we reacquaint our adult learners who are out there that have some credit or maybe they don't have any credit at all, but they've always wanted to do this and the timing wasn't right. It's expensive and prohibitive and now we have these models where it's, if you can find the time, we can find a way to get you through.

Daniel Boothe

I want to ask you this question too as a sociologist, Samantha, I'm sorry to interject a couple quick questions here. But as I look at West Wester, again, I'm a transplant here. I'm from Kansas City. My wife is born and raised in Fruitport. And when I got here, I really saw a tale of two communities. One, you have, as you know, living in Norton Shores and Spring Lake, you have sprawling wealth, which is just, you know, incredible. These homes on the water that are, and then you have communities that are victims of systemic poverty, generational poverty. You know what I mean? And so, as a sociologist, we always say the best way to get out of your situation is education, a higher education, but it's a real true concrete data that suggests that absolutely is the case, is that getting a higher education truly is the answer for a lot of these.

Fletch

So it is fairly conclusive. Again, there's always, you know, when we think about statistics, there's sort of the norm, right? The things that fit in within 66% of the distribution, and then you have all the outliers, right? And all that kind of stuff. But in general, we're confident, and the evidence is pretty confirmatory, that folks with higher ed credentials, particularly a college degree, over the course of their lifetime will earn somewhere between a million and a million and a half dollars more than their non-college educated counterparts, right? There's a lot of variation in that. There's debt to factor in and all of those kind of things, and But there is evidence that is still something, a college education still benefits you. And that's just that sort of economic piece, right? There's all of those other benefits that come along with that too. We know that college educated folks tend to have, are more likely to have health insurance, better quality of lives, right, live a little bit longer, all of the stuff that comes along with that too. So it is certainly a complicated puzzle. I wouldn't simplify it by just saying that a college education is the magic bullet, right? Obviously, there's a lot that

comes into play there too, what you do with it, what your major is, you know, all of those kind of things. And not to discount workforce workforce development, too, because in that same conversation, we're also thinking about all the stuff that we do with our workforce development angle, right? With mechatronics and manufacturing and all of those type of things, where we're preparing students for really, exactly, really good jobs with those things, high-paying jobs. And so, at the end of the day, whatever route it's going, whether it's workforce development onto a four-year after us, finish with an associate's and go to the workforce, those outcomes are probably in most situations going to be better than just right out of high school entry-level job over the life course, right? So some of those out of high school entry-level jobs, particularly post-COVID, they're pretty attractive, right? And people can make decent wages with those things. But over the life course, right, we know that there's some limitations that are built into some of those positions too.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, absolutely. Awesome.

Fletch

So it's complicated, but I'm also a believer in higher ed, so it's hard for me not to say that it's not going to help.

Daniel Boothe

You know, I'm an old, I used to be a reporter for a long time. So I'm curious. I love these conversations. So thank you very much.

Fletch

Oh yeah, absolutely.

Samantha Korecki

For sure. And when it comes to all this college success and getting people to go to college, we are a college who's been around for 100 years, as I'm sure you've heard. So but when we're thinking about the next 5, maybe 10 years at MCC, what's like something you're thinking about that might be some big lofty goal for MCC? If we could get anything done in the next 5, 10 years, like what might be that ceiling for MCC?

Fletch

I think there's so much opportunity. I think being strategic about it, certainly, and thinking about what are the right fit for programs. So again, I'm provost, so I do sort of look at everything through that kind of academic lens. So what are the programs that we currently

have that are striving? How do we continue to support those and take them to the next thing, right? The other piece is What are the programs that we don't have that we should have, right? And really with both of those conversations, making sure that we're integrating the community and all of those conversations all the time, so that it's not just what we here at MCC think is a good idea, right? That we're addressing community need, because to Daniel's point, right, we know there's a significant inequality in Muskegon County, right? How do we address that through the programs that we add? How do we address that through service that the college can provide to the community? So I see a ton of opportunity with that. And in terms of sort of lofty goals, I don't know if I have any real lofty goals yet. I'm sure they'll emerge. I think it's about really continuing to position ourselves in the community and in the statewide and ultimately the national conversation about what a community college is and can be, right? And so I, yeah, so I think there's programs that we can certainly look at. I think there's a lot of opportunity to think about partnering with four-year colleges and four-year universities and really building relationships that look like Muskegon Community College is part of these other places, right? And so that becomes so seamless that in some ways we operate like a four-year school. And maybe that's a route we take a look at as well. But I think all of those type of things, really looking, not limiting ourselves to what a community college has always been, and really starting thinking about, what's a community college from Muskegon that relates and serves this community really look like? And most of that's already happening, right? So that's why it's hard for me to come up with a lofty goal, right? We've got a downtown center, we've got a great theater, we've got all this awesome stuff already. So really it's about, in a lot of ways, putting that stuff on steroids. How do we get more funding for those things? How do we continue to support that, right? And how do we make it really easy for students to come here and not have debt?

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, absolutely. That's what we're trying to do in the communications and marketing department is really trying to drive this home, that community college is not the consolation prize anymore for students, that this is the smart choice. You come here and get in front of the college debt scam that it is. My wife is 38 years old. I said it before on this podcast, she's 38 years old. She's still paying off her college loans. and she's already paid what that loan was for. Right, absolutely.

Fletch

And that's not unique, right? And that's what we're here to address, and you're exactly right. That sort of long-held stigma that community college is somehow some lesser step to the next thing. What we're seeing and how the federal government is supporting

community colleges, we know that's not really true. Actually, to your point, this is probably the most rational, smart decision you can make for those first two years, unless you want to have it's somewhere between \$30,000 and \$60,000 a debt to follow you forever.

Daniel Boothe

Now I'm curious how you partner with four-year institutions and say, well, they're going to come here two years and then you can have them for two years. And in my mind, that four-year institution might say, well, that's money out of our pocket. We want them here as freshmen. So how you navigate those conversations is got to be tough. That's why you're in your pad seat and I'm in mine.

Fletch

Absolutely. I mean, and they can be tricky. I think, you know, the most important piece with that is to make sure that when you're having these conversations, that we're not thinking about, we're not creating a relationship, right? What we're creating is a partnership. And I think it's really important to frame it that way and using that sort of effective partnership model that we're both vested in this. Here's the things that Muskegon Community College is going to do. We'll use Grand Valley as an example. They're probably the college that we transfer the most four-year students to, right? And we get together and we sit around in a room and we talk about, okay, here's what we're going to provide, right? And then you have somebody who is going to be the point person, responsible for our end of things. Grand Valley identifies someone similar to that. And then we're having very regular conversations about what it is that we're going to provide and how we're vested. So it's not about philanthropy, right? We don't want, we're not donating to each other. What we're doing is saying, hey, in our budget, these are the things that we're going to do to support this. And Grand Valley comes along and says, yeah, and in our budget, here's the things we're going to do. So we prioritize it in our budgets. We have people who are responsible for these partnerships. And then the boots on the ground start working through this stuff. We share curriculums. And what we really want to do is make sure that on both sides of that conversation, everyone feels good about what's happening when they land with them. So Grand Valley is looking at our curriculum and saying, yeah, these are the courses that we need for a biology major to land here and be successful, right? And then we're saying, okay, well, yeah, that's great. How should we do that? What are the things that we're not teaching that could be different, right? And so we want to prepare the students, and they want the best prepared students. And so those things become not unidirectional, right? We want them to be multi-directional, so that we're both vested in those conversations. And I think historically that hasn't always been the case in those partnerships. It's been, well, yeah, we want students and four years will say, we're going to transfer all these

credits in. We hear those nightmare stories from students about, well, they told us I was going to get 60 credits there and I got my 60 credits, but they all ended in free electives and I've had to start over again. And now I'm at year four and I've exhausted all my federal financial aid. Right. And so it's getting around those kind of things and making sure that what we're doing really works for the students and the institutions that are both sending and receiving. So it's got to be everybody at the table and a more complex conversation about what our expectations are and how we're managing those expectations.

Daniel Boothe

Awesome.

Fletch

Yeah.

Daniel Boothe

Dr. Brown, I'm so glad you're here and we have you and that you can navigate these tough conversations. Okay, Samantha has a game for you real quick before we get started. Get finished. Shameless plugs. I would be remiss. My supervisor wanted me to get you to plug a couple things. Tell us a little bit about the MCC on tap.

Fletch

Oh, awesome. Yes, I'd love to talk about that. So at my former institution, a great colleague of mine, she had an idea to do a sort of an event similar to this. So I've poached that idea from her, and I'm really excited about the idea of having this be a long-term engagement that we do with Pigeon Hill Brewery.

Daniel Boothe

And so I like beer.

Fletch

Yeah. It's certainly a good motivating factor, and not hard to convince people to come and listen to a lecture or an interactive talk.

Daniel Boothe

I joke, I joke.

Fletch

Yeah, absolutely. Well, no, that's one of the perks for sure. That's how I've been selling it. But we're going to do 4 More of those lectures this year, so we're piloting it this year. We're calling it MCC on Tap, and it's just an opportunity really to engage with the community in sort of a very free, fun, tangible. I'd call it a lecture, but I don't think a lecture is doing it justice. It's much more of a sort of talk. I know we have the first one coming up on the 21st, which is really close here. So that's our inaugural event, October 21st. Dr. Meg Lockard is gonna talk about the role of AI. She's our director of the Center, I'm sorry, coordinator of the Center for Teaching and Learning, and she's also an English faculty member. And so... As you all probably know, our English faculty nationally, as well as here, are very much on the front lines of the discussions related to AI and the appropriate roles of artificial intelligence in a course, right? And so she's gonna talk about the title of her... presentation is ghostwritten and it's about AI and the role of AI in writing student papers. So I guarantee it'll be very entertaining. It won't be generic at all.

Daniel Boothe

Okay, I'm sure it will.

Samantha Korecki

Meg's the best.

Daniel Boothe

That's gonna be awesome. That's a great idea. What a fun way to get out, get the community out and come out and... and make it a fun atmosphere as opposed to, no offense, just another lecture hall. Right, absolutely. Which are great, which absolutely serve their purpose, but I mean, what a fun idea.

Fletch

But with everything that's happening in our world and the conversation nationally around what higher ed is, not, should be, could be, all of those things, one of the things we want to do is we want to invite the community to come see what it is we do, right? come check it out.

Daniel Boothe

And we do have an AI course next time.

Fletch

And we do have an AI course coming up, and we're using AI on campus in different ways, and so we want people to know that we're thinking about it. And we want the community to

engage in these conversations and see how A, digestible this stuff really is and how approachable it is. We don't want people to be afraid of AI or afraid of the community college, right? So it's just another way of bringing people in a very comfortable, relaxed environment, have a beer, listen to what Dr. Lockard has to talk about, or whoever the next person will be and the next person, and be entertained. The goal is entertainment with us.

Daniel Boothe

Awesome. Yeah, I'll be there. All right, Samantha, what do you got?

Samantha Korecki

All right, Dr. Brown, we've got... Four questions, just that right at the end here, no right answers, no wrong answers. Just tell us the first thing.

Fletch

I say usually with these situations, there's only wrong answers.

Samantha Korecki

We will have to put that to the test. So my first question for you is, this is your first year here in West Michigan. I know you've been here before, of course.

Daniel Boothe

Usually in the summer, though.

Fletch

Yeah, right.

Samantha Korecki

You're usually here in the summer. So this winter is coming. How are you with snow? Are you excited about it? Are you scared? How are we feeling?

Fletch

So I know it exists. I grew up in Pennsylvania. So I was on the eastern side of Pennsylvania. So we got some snow there. Because we're so close to the ocean, not as much as other parts of Pennsylvania. But I've shoveled plenty of snow in my life. It's been a long time since I've lived somewhere cold. So I lived in generally the Nashville area for about the last 18 years. And I was in Arizona, Phoenix for about nine of those years prior to that. And so I haven't had a shovel snow in a long time. I actually have joked with President Selman and

some of the team about, at the end of the day, I think I'm loosely involved in the determination as to whether or not the institution shuts down for snow. Oh, good.

Daniel Boothe

Oh, good. He's going to be like, shut it down. Shut it down.

Fletch

And that's exactly what I said. That's what I said. You know, I haven't seen a snowflake in 20 years. So, you know, you may want to reconsider if I'm the right person for that job.

Daniel Boothe

I saw on your LinkedIn file there's palm trees in the background. So, yeah.

Samantha Korecki

In Michigan here, obviously, we've got the lake to the west, so you're going to experience the lake effect this winter.

Fletch

I have actually been here in the winter where we've gotten snowed in and be exactly with that lake effect. So I've seen, I've been here where it dumps 2, 3 feet in a couple of hours, or at least it seems like that. Oh, yeah, I know. Well, what you mean is you used to still come to school.

Samantha Korecki

Yes, before Dr. Brown got here.

Daniel Boothe

Oh, you were a most welcome guest.

Samantha Korecki

Welcome to MCC. My second question for you is Halloween is right around the corner. Who are you dressing up as this year?

Fletch

That is a tough one. So I've been vacillating on that, but I think I'm going to go as Devo.

Samantha Korecki

Okay. All right. I'm happy to hear that. That's going to be great. Devo, fantastic.

Daniel Boothe

We're talking about the 80s band Devo. Absolutely.

Fletch

The little red cone on the top of the head and the overalls. It's an easy one.

Samantha Korecki

I might have to come visit your office, get you on social media. Absolutely. My third question for you is Austin Peay is in Clarksville, just down the road from Nashville. On a scale of 1 to 10, how big of a country music fan are you? And where are you in your time there?

Fletch

Maybe A1?

Samantha Korecki

Oh no.

Fletch

One would be probably charitable.

Samantha Korecki

Okay, not into the country. You've moved away from it.

Fletch

I mean, it's everywhere down there. I mean, I'm not adverse to it or anything, but it's not really my cup of tea. I've done it all. I guess I would say I like the old outlaw country, so Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, some of that kind of stuff. That's not... That's not at the same visibility in Nashville is or any of those kind of things.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, I've heard that Nashville, like it's kind of gotten to a congestion. It's the charm is gone, that it became kind of a destination like in Austin, Texas, where like everyone just started flocking there and now it's...

Speaker 4

Yeah.

Daniel Boothe

The secret's out a little bit.

Fletch

I mean, I think there's some, I think if you talk to the locals, they would certainly say that. and I would also say the local people in the Nashville area probably aren't going down to 2nd Avenue to hang out, right? That's the tourist area. That's where everybody comes in. And it is the second fastest, the last time I had seen this statistic, second fastest growing metropolitan area in the country. So it's very congested. It's got traffic. It's got all those big city things. It didn't always have that, I think. So I think that's a big change for people. But it has great weather and good schools and a lot of things to like about it too. So I think people are willing to trade some of that off. But I'll be honest with you, I don't think I had been to 2nd Avenue in 10 years. Yeah.

Daniel Boothe

Well, I lived in New York City for years and years and you never went to Times Square.

Fletch

Yeah, it's the same kind of thing. So you know, like anything, you figure out how to navigate around some of it. But it's very congested because it's had so much growth in such a short amount of time. The infrastructure is still catching up. So traffic's a thing there.

Samantha Korecki

Yeah, I'm sure it is. Now, my last question for you today, you went to Arizona State and Penn State.

Fletch

I did.

Samantha Korecki

Are you more of a Sun Devil or a Nittany Lion or could you care less? Where's the allegiance?

Fletch

So we are Penn State.

Samantha Korecki

Okay.

Fletch

So for all of my alumni friends that tune into this, they'll have heard me say, we are.

Samantha Korecki

On the record.

Fletch

And then they say Penn State. Yes. We are Penn State. So I'm blue and white at the end of the day for sure. Fantastic. Fantastic.

Daniel Boothe

And what are you? You're a go green.

Samantha Korecki

I did not go to Michigan State, but I come from a Michigan State family. I am a Calvin Knight.

Daniel Boothe

Oh, there you go.

Fletch

There you go.

Daniel Boothe

And believe it or not, I'm A Kansas Jayhawk.

Fletch

Nice.

Daniel Boothe

So I was a Jayhawk growing up, and I'm A Jayhawk here for life.

Samantha Korecki

Destined to come here.

Daniel Boothe

Jayhawk, Jayhawk, and Jayhawk.

Fletch

Serendipity.

Daniel Boothe

Dr. Brown, on behalf of everyone here at Muskegon Community College, I speak for everyone. We are so honored that you're here. We're so thankful for your leadership. We wish you had nothing but success, and go Jayhawks.

Fletch

Well, thank you. It's really a privilege to be here, and I'm glad you all selected me, and I hope I can live up to it. So thanks for having me.

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely. Thanks for coming here. You're listening to Jay Talk.

Daniel Boothe

You are listening to J Talk Next Up as part of MCC's Centennial Celebration. Muskegon Community College's Center for Theater is proud to present These Shining Lives by Melanie Marnick. It's going to be playing November 6th through the 9th, 2025 at the Overbrook Theater.

Samantha Korecki

Written back in the 1920s, which is when MCC was born, the play is based on the true story of four women who worked for the Radium Dial Company, a watch factory based in Ottawa, Illinois. These Shining Lives showcases the danger women faced while highlighting the wider lack of concern companies had for protecting the health of their employees.

Daniel Boothe

And we are proud and honored to welcome in two of the actors in these Shining Lives, Miss Lizzie Fritz and Rosie Hulshoe. Welcome, ladies. Thanks so much for coming on the pod.

Speaker 5

Thank you. Happy to be here.

Daniel Boothe

Awesome.

Samantha Korecki

So before we get started, we at JTalk like to get to know our guests a little better, a little bit deeper. And so tell us a little bit about yourselves. We will start with Lizzie. Where did you grow up?

Speaker 5

I grew up in Whitehall Montague area. I've lived there and been there my whole life. But I spent a lot of my time in Illinois, down at my, Illinois, down at my Mamora's farm. I enjoy a lot of crafts like my mom. I like hiking and exploring places. My favorite thing is cats.

Daniel Boothe

Hi, same question for you, Rosie. Where'd you grow up and what brought you here to MCC?

Speaker 6

So I grew up in Grand Rapids. And then I moved to Kentwood a little bit later. And then I actually just recently moved to Coopersville a couple years ago. I kind of had a choice between GRCC and MCC.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, you're about halfway between the two.

Speaker 6

Yep, yeah. And I just, I found that MCC was just so much quieter. And it felt a lot more peaceful, a lot easier to navigate. So yeah, I really love it here.

Samantha Korecki

Back to Lizzie. When did your interest in theater start?

Speaker 5

I have always loved theater since middle school. I started off with theater when I got into the musical Heathers, which is still my favorite. And then I finally started doing it and getting on stage when I got into my freshman year. And I've been in theater ever since. I do plays. I do musicals. I have directed. I've done backstage tech. I have dabbled in all of the subjects. And I love it.

Daniel Boothe

Were you a Heather or were you a Veronica?

Speaker 5

Veronica.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, you were. I could totally tell that you were a Veronica. That's fantastic that you know that. movie came out when I was your age. So awesome. Same question, Rosie. What inspired you to go into theater? Was there a play? Was there a Broadway show to go to New York and you saw something? What was the spark? What gave you the itch? as we thespians like to say.

Speaker 6

So I started doing theater in elementary school. My school in Grand Rapids, they were doing Aesop's Fables, and they actually... had all of the kids would get a role. And so I shared the role of one of the cats, I think, in the play. So I only got to be in it for half of the play. But it was super fun. And I just, I loved, this was back in second grade, but I loved just being like part of a show. And it was super fun. And so I continued doing theater at a little black box theater in Kentwood, Master Arts Theater. And it was just a lot of fun. And I love the community. And then I continued doing it throughout high school. I was just in a couple of plays at my high school. They mostly did musicals, which is not my forte. But I was super excited to find out about this play. I haven't done theater in a couple of years now since starting college. So this seemed like a really fun opportunity.

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely.

Daniel Boothe

Never really goes away the itch. Yeah.

Samantha Korecki

For sure. What can you guys tell us about these Shining Lives? Tell us about the roles you play and just a little glimpse into what's going on with the show.

Speaker 5

The play is devastating. So I've heard.

Daniel Boothe

With a company named like Radium, I'm sure that things are going to go south quick.

Speaker 5

Yeah. You'll find watching the play, it just like shatters your heart. playing the characters, I can just feel like the pain they went through. And honestly, it's not the same because I'm not poisoned with radium. But throughout the play, it shows, Rosie can talk about this more, but her and Tom's relationship is just jaw-dropping because at the start it's so good and it's gradually just it becomes worse and worse with the radium.

Daniel Boothe

For sure, for sure. Back up a little bit. Tell us exactly, I mentioned it at the start of the podcast, but what is the show about? Can you just give us like a synopsis and an overview?

Speaker 6

Yeah, so the show follows mainly Catherine Donahue and her friends.

Daniel Boothe

And they all work at the.

Speaker 6

Radium Dial Company in Ottawa, Illinois. And the play follows, I think, nine years of their life. But yeah, so it's mainly mainly Catherine. She's the one affected by the radium the most. And it really quickly makes her ill. And It's just, it's a really amazing play.

Speaker 5

I play Pearl.

Daniel Boothe

Okay.

Speaker 6

Yeah, I play Catherine.

Daniel Boothe

Oh, wow. Yeah. Heavy is the crown, right?

Speaker 6

It is, yeah.

Daniel Boothe

And so you have to, I would imagine you have to go through somewhat of a physical transformation throughout the quarter play.

Speaker 6

Yeah.

Daniel Boothe

And that's got to be a big challenge acting wise, right? To start out happy and chipper and with all your friends and slowly deteriorate over the audience's eyes over the course of the two-hour production, correct?

Speaker 6

Yeah, It's been difficult, but it's been interesting to kind of delve into like Catherine's life. You know, she was a real person. So it's been really interesting to learn more about these women.

Daniel Boothe

So I would imagine, Lizzie, there's a responsibility too, because you are playing real people. There's kind of a responsibility to honor those people's memory, is that correct?

Speaker 5

Correct.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah. Tell us a little bit about Pearl and what does she contribute to the story?

Speaker 5

Pearl is known as the funny character of the buns.

Daniel Boothe

It's such a 1920s name too, by the way.

Speaker 5

I'm Pearl.

Daniel Boothe

You don't meet a lot of Pearls anymore, but...

Speaker 5

Pearl, she's the funny character out of all of them. She loves cracking jokes. She loves her best friends, especially Francis. She's her favorite, I'd like to say. They all love the sea. And I think Pearl likes it even more because pearls. She loves the pearl of the sea. And I have found that throughout the play, she matures, especially because of one of her best friends dying. And I think it's really important that I act out her pain and her maturity throughout the play.

Daniel Boothe

That's a balance.

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely. Now it does seem like taking on these characters is really a hefty load of work. How are rehearsals going? How's the show feeling right about now?

Speaker 5

Amazing.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah. It's going great.

Speaker 6

We're mostly off book. We just kind of got off book last week. And so it's been our first few rehearsals this week without our scripts in hand.

Daniel Boothe

Plays are hard too because it's not like a musical where it's like, oh, here comes the big chorus number. And now I get a break. It's like, and you know.

Speaker 6

Yeah, and especially with Catherine.

Speaker 5

She gets no time upstairs.

Speaker 6

Probably 99% of the scenes. I rarely leave stage. So it's been a lot, but it really contributes to this really like fluid pace of the show. And I think that that's really interesting, especially for how long it spans.

Daniel Boothe

Sure, I imagine, you know, whenever you get roles like these, you go up to the cast list and you see it and you're like, I got it. And then the next moment is, And now I have to do it.

Speaker 5

Always.

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely.

Daniel Boothe

It's just like, you're like, oh no, what did I do? What have I done? Yeah. There's a real fight or flight, fight or flight moment. Yeah.

Samantha Korecki

All right. So if you're technically basically off book now, do you guys have any like favorite lines of dialogue you could share with us? Just maybe a little tidbit from the...

Speaker 5

Pearl cracks some really horrible jokes and I don't even understand half of them, but I think she's hilarious. There's one joke. It's why don't chickens like people? Because they beat eggs. And I had to look up the explanation for this one. Really dates the show.

Daniel Boothe

God bless you, Pearl. What about you? Is there a line in the beginning that you can tell us not to give away?

Speaker 6

Yeah, Catherine's first monologue is all really interesting. Probably my favorite line is spout in the middle of the first monologue. Oh, now I'm trying to remember it. You know what?

Daniel Boothe

I'm going to say save it. Let's save it. Let's save it for the audience. I don't want to spoil it.

Samantha Korecki

So tell us a little bit about what it's like working with Les on the theater department on just like getting the show going.

Speaker 5

Amazing. Les is really fun.

Speaker 6

It's been a lot of fun.

Speaker 5

He's a real spunky guy.

Samantha Korecki

That's a great word to describe Leslie.

Daniel Boothe

What's his directing style like?

Speaker 6

Oh man, it's hard to describe, but he's just super fun and really actor-focused, making sure that we're all comfortable with the choices that we're making in the play and that we're having fun mostly. It's been really fun to be a part of this little community that we're making. Yeah.

Daniel Boothe

Theater in general is special because it's a place for misfits like us, you know what I mean, to find home and community, right? So for you, can you tell us both a little bit about what makes MCC Theater so special?

Speaker 5

I just stepped into this big family, so I'm trying to find my place still. But it's like, as soon as I walked in, I was like overwhelmed with just kindness and big hellos and everyone wanted to know who I was. And I really loved that aspect. Auditions are really scary a lot of the time, but when I went to auditions, it was a big like family and it was a big understanding that we may get the role, we may not, but we're all here and we're having fun. And I loved that. And sometimes you can just feel the community in theater. That's great. And I felt a lot of family in it.

Speaker 6

Yeah, I definitely agree. I've also just kind of stepped into the MCC Theater family. This was my first auditions, first role. Congratulations. So yeah, this is, I've never been a part of this community before, but I felt welcomed really quickly.

Daniel Boothe

That is so great to hear, because I would imagine for others, they're like, it's my turn to have the big role and the rookie gets it.

Speaker 6

Right, it's been a little bit intimidating, but everybody is so nice and Les is an amazing director, so it's been really fun.

Daniel Boothe

Awesome. Lizzie has a math test. last year. So we need to move. I see her looking at the clock. She's like, I got to go finish studying. All right, next question real quick. Let's wrap this up. All right, ladies, give us those show details. We'll start with you, Lizzie. Tell us about the show. When and where can we see it?

Speaker 5

These Shining Lives is a play by Melanie Marnick. It plays Thursday, November 6th. Friday, November 7th, and Saturday, November 8th at 7.30 P.m., or on Sunday, November 8th at 2.30 P.m. at MCC's Overbrook Theater.

Speaker 6

The Overbrook Theater is MCC's main campus, 221 South Quarter Line Road, and you can get your tickets by going to MCC's event page at [muskegoncc.edu/theater](http://muskegoncc.edu/theater).

Daniel Boothe

Awesome.

Samantha Korecki

You better believe that we'll be going on there to get those tickets.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah. Lizzie Fritch, Rosie Holshoe, thank you so much for being on the pod. Way to bring it out. And we can't wait to see these shining lives in November. Break a leg.

Speaker 6

Thank you. Go Jayhawks.

Samantha Korecki

You are listening to JayTalk, talking all things Jayhawks, as we welcome in our next guest, Mr. Christian Fletcher, or as his friends like to call him, Fletch. After facing homelessness and unimaginable personal challenges, Christian found hope and purpose here at Muskegon Community College through theater, supportive faculty, and a community that believed in him. Now, pursuing his degree in health science and with dreams of becoming a nurse, Christian is proof that second chances can change everything. Welcome to the show.

Speaker 4

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Daniel Boothe

Christian, we are so honored and thankful that you are here. We all heard your story at the last Bring It Out phase two bash just a couple months ago, and every single person in the room was just truly touched. So we were just so honored for you to be there and to share that with us, which is why we wanted to bring you out of this podcast as well, because your story is worth sharing. And it's just a real story of perseverance, and we're just so proud of you. So I hate to pick at old wounds and pick at scabs, but if you would, for our listeners one last time, can you tell us, you went through an incredibly difficult time. You lost loved ones. You were homeless. You stepped away from school. Can you relive that for us one last time before we close that chapter of your life?

Speaker 4

Yeah, So right after high school, it was COVID, obviously. So I was, I wound up dropping out of high school to, basically I had to pick up three jobs. I was living out in, It was one of those motels on an airline Rd. I think it was the very last one.

Daniel Boothe

The one right across the bridge, right down the street from Whitlow's.

Speaker 4

Yep, it was, I think it was like 300 a week. So I had to wind up getting, had to make up 1200 a month. And I couldn't go to school and make up 1200 a month as a student. So I wound up working at Craig's Cruisers that summer. I worked at, what else? Chili's and Jimmy John's. And luckily they were all right by each other so I could walk and walk. And then I had

a friend who worked at Craig's Cruiser, so I just get roused with them. And then fast forward, just after homelessness, I was, I found an apartment, like I want to say, probably a year into being homeless, I want to say. I found an apartment out there. And then fast forward to, I want to say it was 2023.

Samantha Korecki

Make sure you're down on your mic.

Speaker 4

Yeah, I want to say, I want to say it was about 2023. I was in a production of Little Shop of Horrors and I get a call from my mom. She was sick and she told me like, hey, your brother Little James just died. You need to go to Chicago. And so me, my brother Melvin, we got picked up by our Auntie Shawana at like, I want to say like 3 A.m. We drove to Chicago and we attended his funeral. It was beautiful. Then I went home, I want to say right after his. And then not even six months later, we had a call that our mother just died. And even during the funeral, she was talking about She had them cremated because she told me she wanted to get buried with them. I told her, don't talk like that. And she was right. She was, she told me she was going to die soon and she did. And then I think we're still doing Little Shop of Horrors, I think. No, I think this was, I think Le James was before Little Shop of Horrors. I think I was doing Runaway Princess at MCT at the time. And then Little Shop of Horrors was when my mom died. And then the day after that, I flew on this little like pond. It was one of those little pond planes. I mean, the littlest one. Yeah, like I could tickle the pilot's kneecap from where I was sitting. It was scary. And so like not even 24 hours after that, I think we did the Sits Pro for Little Shop of Horrors. And after that, I want to say it was like a month and a half after I get another call. my heart sank again because, I could tell by the tone of voice, like, again. And I saw my brother's Facebook before anybody called me, said our brother Mario died. And gosh, dang it. I know, It was a tough time, but it was, they were all suffering. So, you know, in a way, I'm okay with them parting to, you know, kind of end the suffering because they were going through a lot at the time, especially my mother. So, I know she's in a better place. And that's all that matters to me. And so after that.

Daniel Boothe

I want to let me pause you. Let me pause you right there. I just want to first and foremost say how we share in your grief and I'm so sorry. And, you know, just between me and you, I lost my brother last year. He's my best friend. I lost him to COVID after all these years. and recently lost my dad a few years ago. So I know firsthand what grief and suffering is all about. And it's just, it just sucks, man. Yeah, it just sucks. There's nothing you can do about it. You just have to sit there and take it. So The only reason I say this is that I applaud you

because where you go from here is so inspiring, I think, to me and others. So I want to back up the story real quick. Were you living in Chicago and what brought you here to West Michigan when your family's down in the Chicagoland area?

Speaker 4

Yeah, so my mom and dad divorced when I was like...

Daniel Boothe

Gotcha.

Speaker 4

Five, I want to say. My dad lived up here and that's who we were.

Daniel Boothe

Okay, gotcha. Very good.

Speaker 4

Yeah.

Daniel Boothe

Very good. And then also for our listeners, a Zitz Pro is basically when when actors come out on a stage and they, you're just in place and you're just getting, they're adjusting the lights, correct? And they're getting, is that correct?

Speaker 4

Not quite. It's just when we're singing with the band instead of like a track time.

Daniel Boothe

Oh, that's right, that's right, that's right, okay. That's 10 as well. Okay, continue, I beg your pardon. So, you've now lost a third member of your family within a six-month, one-year period of time. Okay, and where do you go from there?

Speaker 4

From there, I know when I told my mom that that I was going to, that she was going to see me graduate because at the time I was, I enrolled over at adult education and I was a couple classes shy of graduating already. And I didn't know, I didn't know. I thought they would tell me if I was, close to my degree. I thought I was like really far behind, but I was only like 3 credits short. And that's only three classes. I was like, oh, well, fine, I'll take

them. Then it was, It was geometry and creative writing. There's the classes I took over there. And then when she died, I was kind of slacking off. I really wasn't like, oh, school's not that important. And it was like, oh, I'll go when I'm like, you know, getting ready. And then when she did pass, I kind of felt almost guilty. And I remember there was somebody else in my life, one of my mentors here, they told me that they had cancer. And I wasn't, I was like, I can't, feel that way again. I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna let myself like, feel like I've disappointed somebody else. And, you know, not that she wasn't gonna die, but you know, cancer is, cancer is serious. And you know, she's a little bit older. And so I wound up, wound up going to school because of that, because my mom and her. So that's why I'm back here now. I wound up finishing those two classes in like, I think 3 weeks before the school year started this year. So it really, it was a long journey, but I mean, it was, I think, I don't know, it just shaped me.

Daniel Boothe

So it was really about, it was really about fulfilling a promise to your mother that you said that you were going to graduate and that you were going to do this, that ultimately drove you to MCC. Sam, what's the follow-up question to that?

Samantha Korecki

Yeah, what brought you to MCC specifically? Like what made you kind of start feeling at home here on campus?

Speaker 4

Yeah, so I don't know if you guys know my sister, CC.

Daniel Boothe

Of course, she is a theater royalty here at MCC. She has. She's been on our show as well. So yeah, that's fantastic. Yeah. Shout out to Cece's sister.

Speaker 4

Yeah. Well, not my blood sister, but that my father knew their mother since we were babies.

Samantha Korecki

But Cece, if you're listening, hello from everyone at J Talk.

Speaker 4

My gosh, I think it was we did rent. I want to say three years ago, I want to say. And I wasn't going to audition because I auditioned for, what was it? Mamma Mia, and I didn't get it. And I was like, oh, I know, That's what I said. I was like, I was like, maybe I suck because I haven't done theater since like, since COVID. So it was like, it was been a while since I was on stage. And then They were like, I'm like, I don't know. They were like, no, you would be like a good Tom Collins. I was like, I've never even heard of Rent. You know, I've only like seen it referenced on like TV shows. And so I see.

Daniel Boothe

Oh, it's just like one of the best of all time, too. It's really good.

Speaker 4

It's really good. And then I listened to it and I was like, oh my God, this is beautiful. I got to do it. And so who'd you play? I played Benny.

Daniel Boothe

Is he the older today for me, tomorrow for you?

Speaker 4

No, he's the he's the landlord. He's the landlord. Yeah. So I almost didn't get it because Les works here. He didn't. I auditioned. I sent him my audition like virtually and I guess he forgot to send me send me an invitation to the callback. And you know, I wound up getting it and like, you know, I made I made like really lifelong friends. I reconnected with a lot of people. A lot of the people that were in that show, the leads in the show, I went to school with already. So I wound up, getting familiar with everybody there. And they introduced me to their friends from MCC. And then, some of the faculty, like probably like Susan Eiler is definitely one of my mentors. She's like, to me, like after I lost my mom, like she was there. She kind of took that role. She was always very like, Kind and tenderly to me, and I was in, I was just, I don't know, I was our baby, like it's like I was my mom's baby, so I wound up doing that, and Les Les was just always trying to get me involved into some theater here, some sort of theater here, and... we wound up having a really good time. And they are definitely the reason I'm here today.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, you had mentioned that theater helped you find your niche, your niche and your family here. You specifically called out Les at the bring it out back phase two a couple months ago. I know that Les was really blessed by that. And we talked about it afterwards.

He said, I didn't have to do that, but it made his day. Let me ask you, what role has theater played in your healing and personal growth?

Speaker 4

Yeah, A lot of growth is just through community. Just like, at the time I lost, three really big family members. So I was feeling lonely and they did not let me feel lonely like at all. Like I think CeCe, Christopher, Les, all of them, they would not let me feel like lonely. And like it was able to reconnect me to like some of my older friends like Tyler Ross, Gosh, Tom Bitson, a lot of people, so I'm definitely blessed that they're a part of my lives now.

Daniel Boothe

Let me ask you real quickly, too, Samantha. We had Lizzie Fritch and Rosie Holschuh, who are both in The Shining Lives we have, they're on this episode of the podcast as well, and they just raved about Les. What's he like as a director and what's he like as a theater instructor?

Speaker 4

Yeah, So I'm in class with him right now. He's, you know, he's like a, he's a, he's fun. He's definitely fun to be around. He's also just like, he's stern. He helps you grow, but like in a, you know, supportive way.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah.

Speaker 4

You know, like I can, take. Criticism, as long as it's constructive, and then I just to criticize that was awful, take it again from the top. He just helped me hone in my craft and just really learn who I am as a performer.

Samantha Korecki

Awesome, right? And so, with all this... Great theater stuff that we love to hear. Did you start with theater in your first semester when you came back? Or was that kind of something you found along the way? Like, how was your first semester when you came here to MCC?

Speaker 4

Yeah, well, this is my first semester. So I...

Daniel Boothe

How's it going?

Speaker 4

Good, Really good, actually. A lot better than I thought. I just took my placement test and I thought I was really awful at math because that was kind of my Achilles heel, but I think it's just geometry that I'm bad at.

Samantha Korecki

Fair enough. That's different than algebra. There is a division there.

Speaker 4

It's really different. I think I might just be bad at geometry, but I wound up almost testing out of my math. So there's that. And I had my midterms today for political science. I think I did pretty good on that. Hopefully, fingers crossed. Okay. But yeah, it's going really good. I'm making a lot of new friends and I'm doing pretty good in my classes.

Daniel Boothe

In your speech a couple months ago, you had mentioned that you gave a shout out to some of the mental health and counseling resources here at MOCC. Have they helped you at all in any of your comeback story?

Speaker 4

Yeah, I've done a lot of it over the phone, so I can't really talk about it personally. Yeah, I think that they've been they've been a pretty big part, a pretty good resource to have, and especially like the food pantry, just because I am a college student, unfortunately, so I am poor at the moment, but yeah, they've got a lot of good resources here, especially on like mental health stuff.

Samantha Korecki

Right, yeah. And you've also previously talked about financial aid and Pell Grants and all of those different aspects of financial help being a part of your story. What do you think those kinds of resources are, or what do you think makes those kinds of resources so important for students today?

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, because a lot of students, like you say, that they're poor too.

Speaker 4

Yeah. Yeah, I think it's really helpful. Cause right now I work at 7 Brew. Shout out to my family over there.

Daniel Boothe

Over at the mall? Yeah. There's a line out the door. Why? I don't get it. I thought it was going to be a disaster. I'm like, you got Starbucks right here, and then you got Big B right over by Target. What are you, what are they doing? And that's the place is packed. Is it cheap? Why don't I get it?

Speaker 4

It's cheap. It is. It is way cheaper. And like, I don't know. I think it's just the vibe cause like, you know, we're always playing music in like. we're we're always high energy, so, right.

Samantha Korecki

Seems homier than a Starbucks, right?

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, it does seem homier than a Starbucks.

Speaker 4

We get to know our people, so they always...

Daniel Boothe

OK, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you, but you're the first person I've known that has, like, has any other connection with that, and I've always been curious from afar. All right, so anyway, you're working.

Speaker 4

Yeah, so I work at over there. You know, I can only do like probably 20 hours a week, and that's on the weekends. You know, I also got, you know, like, and I'm an adult now, so I got I got, I got car payments. I got, like, my bills. I got bills on bills on bills right now, in the worst way.

Daniel Boothe

Okay, go to adulthood. I know, that's right. Wait till you have kids one day if you do. Yeah, not yet. That's real fun. Trust me.

Speaker 4

Not yet, not yet. My, gosh, I mean, I just, I go here and then I work and it's like, I never rest.

Daniel Boothe

I understand.

Speaker 4

But, you know, I get my money and then... I don't even get to spend it on anything I want. I mean, except for mine.

Daniel Boothe

You're just the middleman. You're just, yeah, you're right. You're just a currency. I just get the money. Here's your money that I made.

Speaker 4

Oh gosh. It's just, without financial aid, I mean, I feel like I wouldn't even be taking a lot of these classes. But like, it's, I think financial aid and the Pell Grants were able to like, let me not only get the things that I need, but do the also like other stuff that I want. Like acting for TV and a film has nothing to do with being a nurse, but I wanted to do another like, I wanted to be with Les because I know he'll help me grow. And so all of my teachers help me grow. Shout out to all of my teachers right now. They're, I mean, I mean, they're not only are they understanding like my situation because it's like I am like, I'm a college student. I'm working full-time. I'm working full-time.

Samantha Korecki

I only have so much time.

Speaker 4

Yeah, I get it.

Daniel Boothe

I get it.

Speaker 4

They're also very understanding and I always appreciate them for that.

Daniel Boothe

Well, hang in there, buddy, because here's the good news. The good news is that it ends. And it ends shorter and in two years time, You know what? You can either say, I'm still just

working a dead-end job, or you're on your way to a fulfilling career. And nurses make great money, man. And so there will be a day where you just work and you get to pocket your money and you get to travel and you get to be an adult. So hang in there, man. And you know, it'll be over. Trust me, it'll be over before you know it. But I do want to I do want to switch to health science and your decision to become a nurse. What inspired the career path? How does your personal story connect to this idea of wanting to help others and provide health care?

Speaker 4

Gosh, I think it started like even before any of this. I think it was just my dad being my dad. He, you know, he raised, you know, all boys to him. So he, you know, and I know once I got to be like a teenager, I was eating like a like a horse.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah.

Speaker 4

So, you know, he When he first got here, he was a medic in the army. He was a medic in the army and he always helped people and stuff. So, and then he never finished, he never, I think he went here actually. I think for radiology, like way, way back. My dad's old. He's like, he's almost 70, but that's my old man. That's my old man. But yeah, he was always like, kind, caring, and just always willing to help other people. And I think that's what inspired me to become a nurse. I specifically want to be a nurse in like, you know, third world countries. You know, like probably over in the Middle East. Like I get that it's dangerous, but you know, like this is going to sound really, really like sad, but you know, people die every day for, you know, that no cause.

Daniel Boothe

We both have seen it firsthand. Why, oh Lord.

Speaker 4

Yeah, and I just... If I'm going to die, I want to die for, doing for a reason.

Daniel Boothe

So fantastic, man.

Speaker 4

I just, I definitely want to help people out that definitely need it. Like, and I get that it can be scary. But, my dad showed me that, if he can do it, anybody can. And that's what he always preached to me.

Daniel Boothe

So that's, well, that's the universe or God or however you choose to define it. But that's typically something telling you that this is your calling in life. You know what I mean? That this is your purpose and destiny. So I just so I will encourage you to go after it, buddy, and go and get it, man. Thank you so much, because it's not everyone has that on their heart. Thank you so much, you know what I mean? Awesome, awesome. Sam, what do we got next?

Samantha Korecki

Do we wanna? I mean...

Daniel Boothe

I think we've kind of gotten there.

Samantha Korecki

Yeah, I feel like we've kind of gotten there. I might just skip to the last one.

Daniel Boothe

Finally, yeah. Okay. Yeah. You answer the next two questions is basically. We're on it.

Samantha Korecki

We're on it. You're doing great.

Daniel Boothe

Fantastic.

Samantha Korecki

Finally. Yeah. When you think about your future, both as a nurse and as a person who's overcome so much, but also like going in to I'm gonna start that over my brain just stopped working. Finally, when you think about your future, both as a nurse and just as a person, like how much I can't, I need to read this question. Oh, okay. Finally, when you think about your future, both as a nurse and as a person, like... Where do you see your story going? More importantly, like, does it have a happy ending? What's coming? I.

Speaker 4

Wish I knew, but I just, I want to be there for people the way people were there for me. Oh man, I think that's just, wherever I go in life, I just, I think I want to be, I think I want to be an advocate for people who, don't have as much. And I just want to be able to help them get to what they're going through. And I just want to be there for people who need it, who need it. And hopefully, gosh, I think in a positive outlook, I think probably when I'm like 27, 29, depending on when I get my degree. I'll do some travel nursing stuff. And hopefully by the time I'm 30, I'd have a wife, a kid, and probably a house, probably around here.

Daniel Boothe

Attainable goals. Yeah, attainable goals. And worth pursuing.

Speaker 4

Yeah.

Samantha Korecki

And when you're when you're putting so much positive energy out into the world, it will come back to you in all kinds of different ways. It's just I see cool stuff in your future.

Daniel Boothe

All right. Here we go. Samantha, what do we got?

Samantha Korecki

It is time for our final four. I've got four just fun random questions for you. I want you to answer first thing that comes to your head. There's no right answer. There's no wrong answer. We'll just see what you have to say. I got you. I got you. So first up, fall is officially upon us. So what is your favorite season of the year and why? Are you a fall person?

Speaker 4

Yeah, I'm more of a summer person.

Samantha Korecki

Me too.

Speaker 4

Gosh, I just, I love the heat.

Daniel Boothe

What? I do. I do.

Speaker 4

I love the heat A lot. Yeah, I visited California. I just, I just, I love it. I love the heat. I love the water. I love the lake. So I think that's why I'm a summer person.

Samantha Korecki

So where it is. We are definitely like in fall. It's not the beginning of fall anymore, but it's kind of been summer weather up until like this week. We really got a long summer this year. All right, now, second question. You are famous, at least around here, for giving the Vulcan Star Trek sign in our new commercial. Yep, Are you a Trekkie for real? Or what is your actual favorite genre of movie or TV show?

Speaker 4

Gosh, I've never seen Star Trek.

Daniel Boothe

It was all acting, folks. It was, we've been had.

Speaker 4

They told me. They told me I was either going to be like a nurse or a tech and I was like, okay, fine, I'll do it. I'll do whatever.

Daniel Boothe

That is fantastic. So you just went full on nerd.

Speaker 4

Yeah, it was like, I think it was you.

Samantha Korecki

It was. You told me that little peek behind the curtain. Myself and John Mills, our video communication head. We had a lot of fun helping direct Fudge that day.

Speaker 4

Yeah, it was really fun. My favorite genre? gosh, it's probably like a good coming of age story. I love a good coming of age story. Maybe it's because like right now I'm in a transitional period in my life to me. And I'm like, oh, that's me. I get it.

Daniel Boothe

Coming of age story. All right.

Samantha Korecki

Absolutely. All right. Up to #3.

Speaker 4

Yeah.

Samantha Korecki

So picture this. It's a Saturday. It's beautiful out. And you have \$50 to spend. You have to spend it.

Speaker 4

Okay.

Samantha Korecki

What is your ideal Saturday afternoon like activity?

Daniel Boothe

What are you doing that day? Fletcher's day out.

Speaker 4

Fletcher's day out. It had to be the summer. It had to be the summer. Yeah, this is going to sound really like really old school, but I'll probably say I go to the drive-in. I go to the drive-in.

Samantha Korecki

Yeah, the Getty. Have you been to it?

Speaker 4

Oh gosh, not as much as I wanted to, but I mean this summer I've just been so busy with everything, but like I haven't, but I really want to go this year, but I'll probably go to the drive-in. Maybe go on the lake?

Daniel Boothe

Good.

Speaker 4

Get some, get some chili dogs. I love to get chili dog on a summer day. Yeah, that's it. That's it. That's my perfect.

Daniel Boothe

Are you going to GNL? Are you going to Pronto Pups? Where are you going?

Speaker 4

Gosh, GNL.

Daniel Boothe

GNL is pretty good.

Samantha Korecki

I love the classic. Yeah, that's a good answer. Good answer.

Speaker 4

It's cheap. Real cheap too.

Daniel Boothe

Real quick, I wanted to ask you quickly. Go to Final Four, Final Four, then I'll ask you.

Samantha Korecki

All right, we're going to bring it home. We got one more for you. It is the end of October is approaching. It is almost Halloween. Who are you dressing up as this year?

Speaker 4

Me? I got, gosh, who was it? Well, I'm going to be a pirate for one party. And then... Oh, we got multiple costumes.

Samantha Korecki

That's right.

Speaker 4

I do. And then I got another party on the 30th. And then, gosh, what's his name? I'm going to be I'm going to be Tyler Durden in Fight Club for the second party.

Daniel Boothe

That is fantastic.

Samantha Korecki

Cool, You get bonus points for having two costumes.

Speaker 4

Yeah, thanks.

Daniel Boothe

Well, Fletcher, all over campus. Are you tired of everyone saying, I saw your billboard? Are you tired of being famous at all?

Speaker 4

No, I kind of like it. I kind of like it.

Samantha Korecki

We can make you more famous. Come back and visit us again.

Speaker 4

I will. No, even people like not even here.

Daniel Boothe

Yeah, right.

Speaker 4

Like some lady pulled up on at several is like, you are on my Facebook page.

Samantha Korecki

I saw it.

Daniel Boothe

That's right. Yeah, that's right. Yes, I am. Hey, you're an actor. I'm sure it comes with the territory.

Samantha Korecki

Put it in your portfolio.

Daniel Boothe

I will. Fletcher, I want to end with a word of encouragement. I'm so glad that you are the face of MCC because you embody what the MCC spirit is all about. You embody what being a Jayhawk is all about. I only can imagine that you are going to graduate, that other people who share in your story, who look like you, that you are going to be an inspiration to

them, that they're going to look up to you and say that if he can do it, I can do it. And so on behalf of everyone here at Muskegon Community College, we are so proud of you.

Speaker 4

Thank you so much.

Daniel Boothe

You keep up that good work and you go get them. And we look forward to having you on the podcast again.

Speaker 4

Thank you so much.