

00:00 Kenny Greene: You may never know what you prevented, but sometimes it's really obvious the things that we've prevented are catastrophic.

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00:16 Speaker 2: This is Do Good, Be Good. The show about helpful people and the challenges they face in trying to do good. Your host is Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom, a career do-gooder, who also loves craft beer and a good hard tackle in rugby. Sharon speaks to everyday people about why they do good, and what it means to be good.

00:37 Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom: Greetings. I'm your host, Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom. At the start of this episode, you heard Kenny Greene speaking about a field of work that you have probably never heard of, but which is absolutely critical. Kenny is a Non-Destructive Testing Inspector. He will explain more about that later. But basically he tests things like bridges, and pipes to make sure that they are safe and that they are in proper working order. Kenny is gonna tell us why and how he pivoted from a career as an inspector, into founding a trade school, which connects veterans leaving the military with a career in that line of work.

01:15 KG: Our company is War2In which stands for Warrior To Inspector. So we are bringing a warrior, a military warrior, transitioning them to become an inspector. Our students are in a three-semester program and they'll have 2500 hours of formal training, field training, hands-on training, on-the-job training through job site access. They have... Once they gain some certifications, they can be sent out on paid internships and that allows them and helps them to graduate debt-free. And to this point, we have almost all of our students committed by employers, so employers will come in and offer scholarships in exchange for an employment agreement. Through the duration of our school, they'll gain 10 certifications in the QA, QC industrial inspection. Our focus is on non-destructive testing. So with those certifications, they'll definitely be highly sought after. There's a... PQNDT publishes an annual salary survey, and I think ours average salary just went over \$100,000. So they're really good not entry level positions, and our students are coming in not at entry level position with that company, they're coming in at a five to seven-year tech equivalent. So when they graduate, and they hire on, they're finding themselves compatible with someone that has been working there for seven years.

02:55 ST: And where did you grow up?

02:57 KG: So that's a bit of a story. So, I was born in North Carolina, I grew up between Downey, California and Bozeman, Montana. My parents were split up, so I kinda was back and forth between the two.

03:09 ST: What was your... What was your first job that you ever did?

03:14 KG: Working at bowling alley. [chuckle] Long hours late into the night, one to two in the morning on the weekends working as a cook and a porter. So probably not the ideal high school job. A guy named Jay Bird was kind of my mentor, he was the senior when I came in, and the chief cook, and so he had a work ethic. So I think I immediately started to learn the value of a good work ethic, and the necessity there, because the coffee shop was dead, and then 40 people would come in at once and then it would be dead for two hours, and the next league would come in and you would

get slammed with 50, 60 burgers at a time. So just being able to have fun, but there was a lot that you had to do to keep up. I think it might have started right there between that, and what I learned from my parents.

04:04 ST: So when did you first get a job, that you actually really enjoyed or really wanted? Work that you found meaningful personally?

04:13 KG: So I was kind of actually just taking a break from school and I decided to take a semester off at college and my dad had arranged, in his industry, for me to go to work for a company for about that six-month period. And then this was union work, so I had... I was signed up to... Sign on with the Union Hall and then about two weeks before that point in time, he came home with a phone number to call a guy that was looking to train someone into ultrasonic testing, industrial ultrasonics. The whole concept was at the time, just a break from college and taken my vehicle it was totally unreliable and I just wanted to earn enough money to get something reliable to drive and then go back to college. Maybe six months into it I realized that the income I was earning and the potential that, I remember sitting in their office and opening my first paycheck and looking at it and thinking, "Man, I think they made a mistake." [chuckle] So it was at that point maybe six months later, that I thought, "This is where I need to pour my effort, and my heart into this."

05:25 ST: I'm just gonna bring this point home that, that was because it was more than what... Right? [chuckle]

05:28 KG: Yeah, yeah.

05:30 ST: 'Cause I also have had that moment, [laughter] where I open it and I think, I think they made a mistake, but it's the opposite.

05:34 KG: Yeah, I had that at the bowling alley.

05:40 ST: Yeah. Yes.

05:40 KG: But with the ultrasonic testing and inspection, it was definitely more than I had expected in a week's worth of work and it's been a real rewarding career. But that was probably several months into that deviation at the time that I realized that this is what I was going to do, and I haven't looked back. That was 1988-89.

06:02 ST: So that gave you really a career path then...

06:04 KG: Yes.

06:05 ST: To follow, and you were able to just take off on that and learn more and more different types of this.

06:12 KG: It's a real technologically hungry industry, they're pretty aggressive. A lot of the technologies come out of the medical industry into the industrial industry. So you have to be on your toes to keep up with it. Over the years, you're constantly taking courses. That became my career path. And so, here we are today still doing the same thing.

06:33 ST: Do you like that element of it, that there's always more to learn and that you have to keep being that life-long learner?

06:41 KG: Yeah, I think so.

06:43 ST: Were there times when you started to really see the impact that you were having? Any moment that that stood out to you of like, "Oh wow, this is not just something I'm good at, but it also helps people in some way."?

06:54 KG: Some of the inspections can be so routine and so mundane that you just have to be eyes wide open, but at some point in every job, there's that big, "Oh wow, what if I wasn't here moment." And probably the first time that happened, and it was may be a year into it working on an elementary school. So there was some fairly routine inspections and some connections that were gonna be made to bolts that I inspected and all of these bolts failed. Basically through the welding process, it crystallized the material and it was embrittled and so put under the load required by inspection, they failed. That moment, that, "Wow, this is really important. Look what the potential of this is or could have been if I wasn't there, and didn't properly do the inspection." Something at some point in time would have fallen and potentially hurt anybody at that school. I guess you could equate it to an environmentalist in response to a disaster and you put all your effort into taking care of what had happened. But what we end up doing is preventing those things from happening and you may never know what you prevented, but sometimes it's really obvious the things that we prevented are catastrophic.

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08:22 ST: I hope you are enjoying my conversation with Kenny. To support this show, please consider buying a Do Good, Be Good t-shirt or sweatshirt. You can find the details at our website, dogoodbegoodshow.com or at the Facebook page, facebook.com/dogoodbegoodshow. Also, please rate and review our show in your podcast app. This will really help people find our show. Thank you so much for your help. Now, back to our conversation.

08:50 KG: Kind of what fostered the idea of the trade school was me just asking my cousin's husband, who's in the military in the Marine Corps, what his plans were, and if he could get into NDI, they call it in the military, Non-Destructive Inspection, that I could help get him set up in his career path. We were kind of talking back and forth over the weekend and then maybe a month or two later, he contacted me and he had re-enlisted but he had interest of someone that was coming out of the military, could I help them out, that kind of put this in the works. If I was going to help them, how is this gonna work out? That conversation led to a fairly in-depth thought process that became a business plan that was submitted to NASET in December of 2014, and then I spent the entire spring of 2015 putting that together with their help and mentorship. July 3rd, 2015, I left my position as a corporate trainer. After July 3rd, I was 100% committed to opening the doors to the school. In 2012, '13, '14, my traveling was so extensive that just being on flights two to three to four to five hours at a time, sitting in airports next to people and military members; with so many service members and talking to them, what's your plan, I saw a lot of members that were re-enlisting because they didn't have a good plan to transition into the civilian workforce. All the time, I knew that I could help somebody like that out.

10:32 ST: Part of what I'm getting from this is that you're that person that talks to people on planes.

[laughter]

10:36 KG: Not all the time. Sometimes it happens and sometimes you start with the earplugs because you just wanna check out and you need a nap, and then that's when you get the most talkative person.

10:48 ST: I guess you just have that sheer number of flights that it was gonna be a few.

10:51 KG: Yeah, I had 75 flights in 2014.

10:55 ST: Wow.

10:56 KG: Probably 20-30 flights that I had similar type of conversations with people that didn't have a good strategy to transfer into the civilian workforce yet.

11:06 ST: And did you have anyone else close to you in your life or in your family history that had been in the service or...

11:14 KG: My uncle was in the service, he was in the Army. The impression that he's made on me throughout my life was definitely, and still is, that type of impression that was honorable, and you wanna try and duplicate. So he was always an example. I actually lived with him my senior years of high school. As a kid with a divorce, you have the instability and uncertainty and going back and forth. And he was always the even keel in the family, so that definitely raised the bar for me to always try and reach that level of work ethic and honesty and integrity.

11:56 ST: Yeah, and I heard you use the word honor, I think.

11:58 KG: Yeah.

12:00 ST: Do work that's honorable. [chuckle]

12:01 KG: Yeah, and he still does and he actually just retired, and I think those are almost unachievable attributes that he has.

12:10 ST: Are there other things that you've been doing as you develop your organization to try to really imbue it with that work ethic, with those values that you have, with what you're trying to create?

12:22 KG: Yeah, I think the... Probably the more important thing that we are teaching is work ethic, and integrity. So, that's fundamental to the inspection trades. Probably the first thing they hear on day one is the importance of integrity, the importance of accuracy, the importance of honesty. So we don't ever want them to be put in a position to have their integrity challenged and then they have to make the decision on what to do, they're making that decision on day one, and we're helping them. So we have kind of a policy and understanding that you're on time every time, always early, never late. Because when we go into the field, there's 10, 12, 15 people, other crew members from other companies waiting on us if we were to be late, which is not gonna happen.

13:15 KG: But there's a lot on the line if we're not there, so I can't expect them to be on time to a

project if they're not on time every day at school. So those are the things that we need to instill far in advance. So when they do get to their employer, those issues are never going to arise. We're gonna iron that out. Our entire industry is based on integrity. So we're helping facilities make sure that their assets have integrity, that they can hold the pressure they're designed to hold, that they are safe for the public around that facility. So, if we ourselves don't have integrity, the whole industry is undermined, we're protecting assets that are critical for us as a society to function.

14:02 ST: Those would be like bridges and...

14:05 KG: Bridges...

14:06 ST: Pipelines and...

14:07 KG: Pipelines, power plants, refineries, solar farms, railroads, ski areas. So things that we would often take for granted. We've been able to be really fortunate, we've taken on no debt, we're 100% debt-free. We've had no support as far as grants or financial support, except human kindness is baffling. I'll give you an example of how we have just survived. So today we are at the office store buying supplies today, and we're stocking up for this fall, and we have a full cart, full of supplies and we come up to the register, and a guy named Richard is there paying for a magnifying glass. [chuckle] And he looks and he goes, "Obviously, we have a lot of supplies, and are you a teacher?" And I said, "Yeah, we teach at a trade-school, private trade school." And he asked about if we have any support for all these supplies. And I said, "Well, we're self-funded." So he decided he's gonna pay for everything we have in our cart, so we kind of challenged him, like, "We have a lot of stuff here." He buys all the students supplies to the tune of \$285 with just pass it forward type of a smile and mentality. I'm just super-grateful that that has happened to us over, and over, and over, and over. In a way it's really hard to receive that, but I can do it on their behalf. We have a lot of people to be grateful for, definitely.

15:37 ST: Yes, so what does it mean to you to be good?

15:40 KG: I think it's getting out of yourself probably more than anything. So just going from those two types of scenarios, whether you can't see outside of yourself because of the famine or because of the feast. At some point, I decided the rest of my career wouldn't be about me. Having that time to travel and talk to the military personnel and seeing the need, the true genuine need. And our industry is so short-handed. To be able to make the choice that the rest of my career is gonna be about them, not about me is kind of the point where when you start to live that out, you realize, maybe it wasn't like, "Hey, I'm gonna go do something good." But just after it had happened and we're in the process, you realize that you are doing something good. I guess the enjoyment you get out of other people's success has been more than you can have out of your own success, so you just realize you're caught up and good at that point.

16:45 ST: Thank you for listening to Do Good, Be Good. For show notes on all of our episodes, visit dogoodbegoodshow.com. If you want more behind-the-scenes stories and insights check out the show page at facebook.com/dogoodbegoodshow. Thank you to Kenny Greene for coming into the studio and sharing his story. To subscribe to this podcast so that you get each episode as soon as it is released, search for Do Good, Be Good, in Apple Podcast, Stitcher, Google Music, or whatever your podcast app of choice is. We'll have a new episode coming out next Wednesday.

24 Kenny Episode

17:21 ST: Thank you as always, to Sun Sounds of Arizona for letting me use their studio, and a shout out to our new editor, Bob Larkin, for his great work on this episode. Music in this episode is Bathed in Fine Dust by Andy G. Cohen, released under Creative Commons Attribution International License and discovered in the Free Music Archive. Until next week, this is Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom signing off.

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