

AT Banter Podcast Episode 302 - Blind Beginnings Limitless B...

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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, Ryan Fleury, Shawn Marsolais

R Rob Mineault 00:37
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

S Steve Barclay 00:43
Mooooooooo

R Rob Mineault 00:44
Hey, this is of course the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. And joining me today, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R Ryan Fleury 01:01
Hello.

R Rob Mineault 01:04
Wow. And, and making his triumphant return to the podcast after probably more than a month of being out in the deep blue ocean. Mr. Steve Barclay.

S Steve Barclay 01:19
I am 100% entirely fish now.

R

Rob Mineault 01:24

And no Lis Malone today she's probably off dealing with her new diet, which we'll catch Steve up on later. How are you guys?

S

Steve Barclay 01:43

Oh, just dandy.

R

Rob Mineault 01:45

Well, yeah, you should be just dandy, you just had a month off.

S

Steve Barclay 01:49

Ever, ever so excited to be back at work and just behind this picturesque desk instead of you know, out on the water, looking back at the coast, beating fish over the head. You know, this is so much better. Yeah, totally.

R

Rob Mineault 02:03

So sure. How did how was fishing season this year? How do you how do you do?

S

Steve Barclay 02:10

Pretty well. Freezer's full. We even got out for tuna once, which was exciting. We caught 32 tuna in about three hours.

R

Rob Mineault 02:19

Wow.

S

Steve Barclay 02:21

And yeah, got some salmon, halibut got some ling cod got some rock cod. Freezer stuffed. So yeah, it's all good.

R

Rob Mineault 02:29

Well, so when you catch that much fish, do you just pretty much just have fish all the time for

well, so when you catch that much fish, do you just pretty much just have fish all the time for an entire year? Like how do you go through that much fish?

S

Steve Barclay 02:38

You eat it. Barbecued salmon...

R

Rob Mineault 02:44

Yeah, but that's the thing. I mean, you must have it all the time. Like don't you get sick of fish?

S

Steve Barclay 02:50

No, not really. I mean, we have we have different different things with it. Right? Like we'll do. You know, we might do fish tacos one night and then we might do like a coconut curry halibut. Last night I did a maple pecan glazed salmon. So you know, there's there's stuff you can do with it.

R

Rob Mineault 03:13

I say. All right. Well, that's fair. Then Ryan, why don't you tell the fine folks at home just what we're doing today.

S

Steve Barclay 03:24

Today we are welcoming back to our show Shaun Marsolais from Blind Beginnings and the Limitless Podcast to tell us all about an upcoming event they are having in October. Welcome back, Shawn.

S

Shawn Marsolais 03:40

Thank you. Thanks for having me. Steve, those were some yummy recipes. You were just talking about my mouth watering. I think I need an invite or something already.

S

Steve Barclay 03:51

Come on over!

S

Shawn Marsolais 03:52

Can't just brag about all that fish and all those delicious meals. Apparently these guys do not appreciate fish. I don't know, their enthusiasms a little low on the fish scale.

R Rob Mineault 04:03
That's true. I'm not much of a fish person.

S Steve Barclay 04:06
Rob won't eat anything unless it's battered to begin with.

R Rob Mineault 04:09
So that's not exactly true. But I do admit I am a little bit picky when it comes to seafood. But but you know, but salmon is nice. Salmon is nice. And on some of those did sound fairly tasty. So all right. Well, why don't we get started? Shawn maybe if you could just give the folks at home a little bit of a refresh on Blind Beginnings, your organization and just what, what we do over there.

S Shawn Marsolais 04:40
Sure. So Blind Beginnings is a nonprofit that supports children and youth who are blind or partially sighted and their families across BC. We were founded in 2008. And we provide a range of programs from a youth leadership pre employment program to summer camps counseling and support groups for kids, teens and parents, family community discovery outings, family retreats, and parent workshops and creating confidence workshops for youth.

R Rob Mineault 05:15
Now tell us a little bit about this Fashion Show that's coming up.

S Shawn Marsolais 05:20
And you just kind of was just like gave it away just right. Like, like no one's even said.

R Rob Mineault 05:26
Didn't Ryan say?

S Shawn Marsolais 05:30
He said an upcoming event.

R

Rob Mineault 05:32

Did he? Okay, hold on. You're right. Okay,

S

Shawn Marsolais 05:35

Well, let's drop the bomb like that.

R

Rob Mineault 05:42

So any big events coming up?

R

Ryan Fleury 05:46

I love this show.

S

Shawn Marsolais 05:50

Actually, there is a big event coming up, Rob. Yeah, in October, we are having a fashion show. It's called the Limitless Beauty Blind Beginnings Fashion Show. And all of the models will be youth who are blind or partially sighted. And it's taking place on October 16. And it's a fundraiser and we're very excited about it.

R

Rob Mineault 06:16

Where did the the idea about doing a fashion show sort of come from?

S

Shawn Marsolais 06:19

So five years ago, you some of you might remember we did Do The Grind Blind. And that was a pretty big event that raised a lot of awareness and got some media attention, empowered the youth. And we were doing some strategic planning as a board and staff over COVID and decided that we wanted to do another type of go big event, a big event that would raise awareness and you know, kind of get our name out there a little bit more. So a group of us got together and brainstormed a bunch of ideas. And I was thinking while we hiked the Grouse Grind last time, like maybe we'll do like an overnight kayaking trip or, you know, I was thinking physical sporty, but somebody suggested a fashion show. And everybody just loved the idea. And it's kind of challenging perceptions in a totally different realm. So I think when you think of blindness, you might think that people who are blind don't care what they look like, or don't care about fashion. Or, you know, beauty and blindness might be might not be two words that you would put together necessarily. So we thought, what a great idea to create an event where we're kind of showing that just because you're blind doesn't mean you're not fashionable, and,

and how we sort of see beauty. So some of the youth might have chosen their outfits based on how it feels or how it makes them feel, or, you know, or actually like the texture of the clothing. Which might be different than how a sighted person chooses what their sense of style is.

R

Rob Mineault 08:01

So, talk to me a little bit about about the models themselves. Was there was there a sort of a selection process? How did you choose models.

S

Shawn Marsolais 08:13

So we, we put it out there, we were looking for teens who are blind or partially sighted who live in British Columbia, we our criteria was very, very broad. So we weren't concerned about gender, or body size, or race or, you know, basically, anybody who wanted to be a model was eligible to be a model. They needed to be willing to be photographed and videoed during the event, and featured on our website, and they needed to have a visual impairment and, you know, kind of be comfortable walking in front of a crowd and showcasing themselves and their outfits. So definitely not everybody's thing. I don't think I would personally want to be a model in a fashion show, but we did get nine youth to sign up. Eight of them are teens, one of them is a bit younger. And so yeah, we've got a diverse group of individuals, couple males, the rest female, somebody who uses a guide dog some some of them use white cane, some of them don't use a mobility device. So I think it'll be a really cool event. And it was interesting to see, you know, part of we did a training camp so they came for three days to learn how to be a model and part of it was going to the mall and buying their outfits and at the end of the day, at the end of the shopping day, everybody passed around their purchases so we could all kind of feel the shoes and the you know, the stuff that they bought and and kind of hear about the outfit and how it was going to be put together and it is going to be quite a different. Everybody's picked something different, which is kind of cool.

S

Steve Barclay 09:59

Nice. So when you And you took them out on that on that day to get acclimatized to being a model? Did you refuse to feed them and yell at them?

S

Shawn Marsolais 10:07

No, we were very supportive to our models at Blind Beginnings. Ya know that some of the challenges were like, we wanted a sighted volunteer with each youth to do the shopping. And to make, you know, to give them feedback, like what looks good, what doesn't maybe that's not a good color for you. Or maybe that style doesn't accentuate things the way you want it to, and finding individuals who are brave enough to be honest. But, you know, also fashion minded and able to, yeah, kind of say, it's really easy to tell somebody that looks great. It's a lot harder to say, no, that doesn't look great. So we had, we had some great volunteers helping us out. And I feel like everybody did walk away with something that they feel good in. So that's important.

R

Rob Mineault 10:59

So was there a sort of a significance in the date, like in October?

S

Shawn Marsolais 11:05

Oh, yeah. I think we decided on, I think it is the weekend before Fashion Week. Because we didn't want to be in competition with all the other fashion shows. But we wanted the media to pay attention and notice what we were doing kind of alongside Fashion Week. So we kind of recognized we're not professionals at putting on fashion shows. And I think it's still gonna be great. And it's going to be unique, which is the most important part, I think. But yeah, that's why we picked that date.

R

Rob Mineault 11:41

Yeah, I was just gonna ask because I don't, I don't know of anybody else that is has tried anything like this. So there's really no template to follow. And even really, like me, I don't even know, I'm trying to think I don't know if I've ever actually seen a real fashion show.

S

Shawn Marsolais 11:56

Oh, me, either. I've never been to a fashion show. I mean, part of it is it's a pretty visual event. I understand that you I think I've seen a fashion show on TV, maybe as part of a show or something. But you know, basically, everyone's just clapping while someone walks back and forth, it seems like to me, so that's not very blind friendly. But of course, it's a Blind Beginnings event, so it's all going to be audio described. So if there are blind people in the audience, they'll be well, actually, everybody will be receiving the audio description, because we want to kind of educate people about that as well. So even if you are sighted, and you can see what's going on, you're going to hear the description of the outfits, you're going to hear what description of what the models are doing, how they're posing, that kind of thing. So but no, there was no template to follow. And I I'm very much out of my depths, I'm I'm a pretty casual person, I'm I just generally think that if I look kind of like everyone else, I'm doing well in terms of fashion. And I learned a lot over the course of the training camp that, you know, fashion is kind of about finding your individuality, in your wardrobe and in your style. And I'm like, Okay, I still don't have that. So having to create a program to prepare a bunch of models has been kind of ironic for me because I'm not one and not real up on fashion, but I think it's gonna be okay, I realize I'm not selling it very well by saying that, but you'll have to come out and see for yourselves whether we pulled it off or not.

R

Rob Mineault 13:39

Well, what's interesting to me is that, you know, that that's, that's the magic of this is that, you know, it's it's stepping outside that box, it's trying something new, that you're not really sure how it's going to work out, but just pushing through it anyways. So I'm curious to know what kind of feedback that you're getting from some of the teen models, because I would think even just the the action of of signing up for something like this would be terrifying. Even to just a

sighted teen, I think being being, you know, having all eyes on you, and being the center of attention, even just for that, you know, 30 seconds that it takes you to walk back and forth. That's really scary, in and of itself, no matter who you are. But I'm sure that there's even another level of, you know, anxiety when when that teen is blind or partially sighted. So you know, what kind of feedback are you sort of getting back from the models as they learn all of these, all of these skills and stuff? Are they are they pretty excited, or are they still pretty nervous?

S

Shawn Marsolais 14:44

I think it's a mix. I think that some of them may have not really had an idea of what they were signing up for. I know a couple of them came to the training camp this summer because it was a chance to be with their friends right now. "My friends going I want to come to and I live remotely, and I don't get to be around other kids who are blind very often. So yeah, sure I'll be in fashion show, what's a fashion show?" So I think there's, there's a couple of those one for sure. But, and then there's and then there's the other end of the spectrum of like, "Oh, I'd love to be a model in a fashion show." And everything in between. One of the other things we did at the training camp, we had a model instructor come and teach them how to walk the runway and how to pose. And I think that session was where it kind of got real, because, you know, he's telling them things like, you want to place one foot in front of the other kind of like walking a tightrope. You want to lead from the belly button when you're walking like, so the way you stand feels really awkward. The way you walk feels awkward. It's really different from how you would normally walk. And then and then taking them through a bunch of different ways to pose at the end of the walkway, walkway runway, you know, where to put your hands and what to do with your body and put this leg this way. And so I think once they started practicing some of that some of them are like, wait a minute, what is this like? Oh, and everyone's gonna be watching me. Yeah, I'm sure they're feeling nervous, but also excited. I gotta say being blind sometimes is an advantage when you can't see all those eyes looking at you. Sometimes that's helpful. You know, for me, I feel like in front of a camera, for example, I can easily pretend the cameras not there. But when you can see it, you're just sort of feeling really awkward the whole time. So maybe not being able to see everyone watching is helpful for some of them. You've actually kind of made me feel like I might have something going for me as model because ever, ever since I started drinking beer I've been leading with my belly button.

R

Ryan Fleury 17:01

All shapes and sizes.

S

Shawn Marsolais 17:06

That's very funny. It was something about tilting your upper body back it wasn't so much having a belly to lead from fashion show.

S

Steve Barclay 17:21

I'm halfway there.

R Rob Mineault 17:26
Hey, listen, if this if this. If we pull this off, Steve, next year we'll we'll do a fashion show for people with beer bellies. Limit belly fashion show.

S Steve Barclay 17:40
Oh, my goodness, of course already been in a fashion show before I was I was actually in a lingerie show once.

R Rob Mineault 17:45
What?

S Steve Barclay 17:46
Yeah, yeah.

S Shawn Marsolais 17:48
Is there a punch line?

S Steve Barclay 17:49
No, there isn't. I actually I actually walked into a lingerie show that was going on at this convention that I was at, and I walked in it and then the next thing I know people are chanting, "Steve, Steve, Steve, Steve, Steve" and I got dragged up on stage thrown into a Merry Widow outfit and sent down the runway.

R Rob Mineault 18:06
Wow.

S Steve Barclay 18:08
Yeah, that was it was horrifying.

S Shawn Marsolais 18:15
I was gonna say maybe you should come and talk to the youth and give them some pointers.

R

Rob Mineault 18:18

But you know, it's so interesting. You this really reminds me of something else that you guys did a few years back, which was the flash mob. Because I can understand how something like a flashmob and dancing for blind and partially set of youth would be equally as sort of a terrifying idea, but also exciting at the same time.

S

Shawn Marsolais 18:51

Yeah, I think dancing is another one. That's, you know, you sort of learned to dance by watching what other people do -- at least I wish I could watch what other people do. So I could have learned how I think, you know, oh, people just say, "Oh, just move your body and do whatever you feel". I think that's baloney. I've had people laugh at me when I've done that. So yeah, I think it was a little bit scary. But the thing about a flash mob is everyone's doing the exact same thing at the exact same time. And you've learned all those steps in advance. So I always found that kind of dancing wasn't scary, like line dancing is something I can get behind because I can memorize a bunch of steps and do them in time to the music, like that's easy. It's the sort of freestyle dance where you're just supposed to enjoy the music and move your body where you don't know what the rules are and you're not really sure how you look compared to how everybody else looks and that's when you feel really self conscious. So the flashmob was really empowering because, you know, you didn't have to worry about that. As long as you remember the steps you knew you were doing what everyone else was doing. And we incorporated white canes into the dance, which was pretty cool, too. So everybody knew, I think that we were blind. So if there was a little bit of, you know, forgetting something here or there, I'm sure people would have forgiven us, but it was cool.

R

Rob Mineault 20:18

So when you guys were sort of putting together this idea, or how important was it, to sort of have it as a piece that was going to sort of empower and create confidence in the participants, but also be something that could potentially educate the public? Like you were you guys always trying to sort of balance those two?

S

Shawn Marsolais 20:41

I am always trying to do things that yeah, where it's tying into benefiting the youth. Like I don't, I don't really want to do an event that involves the youth that isn't going to benefit the youth in some way. So, you know, Do The Grind Blind was like showing them that you can do something really physically challenging, with the right support and the right training? And, and if we shatter some misconceptions of blindness along the way, well, that's fantastic. And the same with the flash mob. It's like you're you feel uncomfortable dancing. Well, let's do something where you do feel comfortable dancing, in a really empowering positive way that gets people's attention. So with with the fashion show, for me, it's really about, you know, I've always been uncomfortable about do I look right, compared to everybody else? Am I underdressed? Am I overdressed? You know, am I am I in style or not? Like, it's something that I worry about a lot.

And so, if I had had something like this, when I was younger, to sort of teach me about fashion, and teach me about that, it's okay to look different and you can own it. If it's something you like, and it feels good, you don't have to look like everybody else necessarily. I think I've always worried that because I'm blind. If I do do something bold people will think oh, of course, it's because you're blind. You don't know. You don't know that that's bright orange or something (not that I would ever wear bright orange), probably. But anyways. So yeah, I think for me, it's about making sure that these youth, you know, are going to learn something and gain some confidence in their appearance, be able to hang out with peers and not feel insecure all the time about what they're wearing, and how they look, how they're styling their hair, those kinds of things.

S

Steve Barclay 22:33

Where are your clothes coming from?

S

Shawn Marsolais 22:35

Metrotown. We were hoping that some clothing stores would sponsor the youth as well. But, you know, we just didn't really have enough capacity to really pursue that. And it was kind of hard because until we brought the youth together, we didn't know what style each of them wanted to represent. And I think they didn't necessarily even know some of them until they went shopping. So you know, going with somebody who can tell you what this is. Like, part of the training was like, what are skinny jeans? What are boyfriend jeans? What are bootcut? But we passed around shoes, and we talked about the you know, what's a pump? And what's a dress shoe? And what's a sling back? And and what are all these things, so they could have a greater understanding, because maybe they've only ever really worn what their parents picked out for them. And their high school students, most of them, so they probably live in runners, you know, and maybe they haven't worn a range of different kinds of shoes. So yeah, we didn't get a lot of sponsorship in the clothing we we do have a couple of clothing companies who are willing to have our models wear some of their some of their items. And we haven't figured out yet whether that's going to be happening or not. And we have a couple of fashion design students who have outfits that they would like modeled in the fashion show, we just have to see if any of the models are the right size to do that. So everybody's purchased one outfit that there'll be modeling and that was purchased at Metrotown Mall. And we had a budget for each of them. And then an additional some of them are going to do an additional outfit and that might be a sponsored outfit.

S

Steve Barclay 24:26

She's I'm thinking Ryan, you should hook her up with the Two Blind Brothers down in the States.

S

Shawn Marsolais 24:31

Yes, we did reach out to them and I think they are willing to send us some stuff. So that might be one of the ones that does sponsor and we also have connected with Aille Design. I don't know if you guys have ever talked with Alexa. I think her name is Alexa. She has this clothing

know if you guys have ever talked with Alexa. I think her name is Alexa. She has this clothing company where they she incorporates Braille. So she uses beads and it actually says stuff on her clothing which is kind of cool.

R

Ryan Fleury 24:58

Yeah, she will be on this show in two weeks.

S

Shawn Marsolais 25:00

Oh, nice. She's great.

R

Ryan Fleury 25:03

So what were the parents thoughts, opinions, attitudes towards their young adults wanting to do this, wanting to be part of a fashion show and putting themselves out there.

S

Shawn Marsolais 25:16

I would say, I, I'm assuming supportive. So most of these individuals, I didn't talk with their parents, because they're teens, so they kind of sign themselves up. Of course, parents had to give consent for them to participate. But one youth did come, his mom actually came as a chaperone. She was very supportive and encouraging. And he's got quite a cool sense of style. And designed some of his own clothing. And our youngest model, it was, it's her Mom is on the planning committee and one of our board members. And so she's very supportive of her daughter being involved, she kind of said, oh, there's no way she's not going to be involved, she definitely wants to do this. So we're excited to have her participate. But I think yeah, I think most of the parents are just supportive in general of, of their youth trying something different, maybe gaining some confidence, hopefully, and learning something new at the same time.

R

Ryan Fleury 26:16

So did you get any feedback from any of the retail outlets when these people were shopping in their stores?

S

Shawn Marsolais 26:24

Yeah, it's interesting, because we actually have a film crew was following us around for the training camp. And they'll be filming the fashion show as well. AMI is making a documentary of this whole venture. And a couple of the clothing stores they tried to get permission to film, because they were in there for a big long time with a couple of the models and the stores said no. And we were kind of shocked, because really, it's just good advertising for them. The people in the stores working there, were fantastic and supportive. But their head offices were, were saying, no, we're not okay with this. So that was kind of disappointing. But I think some of the

girls went to a makeup store, and the makeup person was really excited and wanted information about the actual show, so that she could be there, she wanted to see how it all came out. And actually, some of the volunteers I, I was scrounging for volunteers this summer in every program. And this was no exception. So I had some people who were brand new to blind beginnings, blindness, thrown in paired up with a youth and sent off shopping for the day. And several of them are like really wanting to continue to volunteer and be involved. And they want to come to the fashion show and, you know, really got hooked by by spending the day with a visually impaired youth. So that was pretty cool. So I think anybody who had the chance to hear about what we're doing was was pretty excited about it.

R

Rob Mineault 28:00

So talk to me a little bit about some of the challenges behind planning an event like this, especially sort of post COVID? Do you still find that there's still some remnants of, of like event gatherings that you still have to deal with, when you're when you're planning something like this?

S

Shawn Marsolais 28:18

I'm not sure yet, if that will be, if COVID will be a factor. It's a pretty small venue where we're holding the event, and we can only sell like 75 tickets. So I don't think it's going to be a problem selling 75 tickets is kind of like this is an exclusive event. And in terms of, you know, the models being able to come to the camp in the summer, I was a bit worried about that. But that didn't seem to be an issue. I'm trying to think if there were other challenges we'll get in a restaurant reservation was challenging for the group because they didn't take reservations for groups in the evening, which I thought was really bizarre. So, you know, I guess some things maybe, maybe are different because of COVID but for the most part, I don't feel like it's hampering us too much.

R

Ryan Fleury 29:19

Are there any limitations or restrictions because I'm assuming that the models aren't just going to be walking on a floor in front of people, they're going to be up on a stage or runway, and some of them will have white canes and dogs. So was there training involved so that they could find their mark and know to stop and not fall off the sides?

S

Shawn Marsolais 29:39

Good. Good question. Yeah. So we had a whole sort of brainstorming session on that at the camp. It is actually going to be just walking on the floor so you don't have an actual runway. We're probably going to have a carpet that they will follow. But one person is going to be using a guide dog so we had to sort of, you know, decided she wanted to use her dog as she walked the runway or not. And if so, how was she going to do the turn at the end? And how is she going to do the posing? And, you know, would somebody hold the dog at the end while she poses? And then she takes up the harness again? So just kind of figuring that out. Or if you're using a white cane, how does that impact the way you're walking? The way you're posing?

What do you want to do with your cane while you pose all of those things. So we've definitely had some conversations about that. And, sadly, the youth have not seen the venue yet. So the camp we didn't, we weren't able to go there and practice on site. So that will be happening in the morning of the fashion show. Many of them don't live in Metro Vancouver, so they'll be coming back into town the night before. And then we'll spend the morning kind of prepping and practicing walking the runway, again, in the real space. So they can kind of figure out the timing and the pacing and things like that. But yeah, that's the part that would be really nerve racking. If it was me, I would be worried about not tripping and falling and not walking off the side or bumping into the chairs or those kinds of things.

R Rob Mineault 31:12

Yeah, that turn that turn is going to be stressful.

R Ryan Fleury 31:15

Yeah. Steve, setup some beacons, three feet to go, two feet to go, turn, pose.

R Rob Mineault 31:25

That'd be cool. It is interesting, because, you know, really, it's all just about adaptation and adapting the environment in order to make it work. And, and, you know, this is this is just a, you know, a perfect example of what you can do with with a little adaptation.

S Shawn Marsolais 31:45

Yeah. And also, you know, I feel like, in my younger days, I would have, I would have not wanted to use my cane, and I would have like, Okay, I'm just going to feel the carpet under my feet and I'm going to count my steps. And I'm going to memorize, and I'm going to do this, because I want to look, quote, unquote, normal, is what I would have thought back then. And I think it's so great that these youth are not like I was, they are already more confident, they're not embarrassed of their blindness. And everybody's willing to kind of showcase that. It's not something to be ashamed of. And if you're walking down the runway with a white cane, you can still walk with confidence. You can still strut your stuff, you can still look hot, right? It's, it's it's okay. And I I'm just excited to see how that all comes together. Because I think it's it's awesome that that they want to show that they're not trying to hide that part of themselves.

R Ryan Fleury 32:41

Has anybody asked if they can use a colored cane? Because we all know there's pink cane, yellow canes or blue canes.

S Shawn Marsolais 32:47

Yeah, I some of them do have colored canes. So that might be that might be what they choose. And I'm totally fine with that. I know, there's some controversy about the colored cane. Some people think it's not good. It's not as safe. People don't recognize it as a symbol of blindness. But I mean, from somebody who didn't use a cane for so many years before, I should have been using one, I think a pink cane is better than no cane. It's still a lot safer. So, you know, it's a fashion statement, right? And we talked to the kids about that, if you want to get a different colored cane. Or at Christmas, we decorate our canes, like, yeah, add some bling to it, do whatever you want to do to make it. Make it cool.

R

Rob Mineault 33:33

So I want to talk a little bit about something else that's happening this month. Coincidentally, you know, another sort of big event of Blind Beginnings did a few years back. This month marks the fifth anniversary of Do The Grind Blind, where you took a group of blind and partially sighted hikers up the Grouse Grind. Can you talk a little bit about about that event and if if you guys are doing anything special to sort of mark the occasion?

S

Shawn Marsolais 34:06

Funny you should ask. We are. Yeah, so yeah, it was September I think it was October 11 or 9th or 10th. Anyway, that weekend, five years ago, nine youth who are blind and myself and we each had a sighted guide, we we climbed the Grouse Grind. And if you haven't, if you if you're interested, AMI made a documentary called Do The Grind Blind. It's pretty cool. Check it out. So in honor of our fifth anniversary, I reached out to the group to see if anybody wanted to redo it. And we've got four youth and four guides and myself and we're going to climb this coming weekend. We're gonna head back to Grouse Mountain and do it again, with no training this time. I mean part of the training was to sort of prepare them for what to expect as much as the physical training. So each month leading up for four months leading up to the Grind every month, we did a different hike. And they ranged in difficulty from going around Burnaby Lake, which is like a flat 10k walk on a gravel, nice flat gravel trail. Then we did the Coquitlam Crunch, which is about 500 steps. And then, you know, an incline up the side of a mountain, but nowhere near as long or as as crazy and steep as the Grouse Grind. And then we did Quarry Rock in Deep Cove, which was a little bit more treacherous. So kind of more obstacles to deal with. And then we did the BCMC trail up Grouse Mountain, which is not as steep but longer. And that was pretty challenging. I still haven't done it because when the youth were training for the Grind, I broke my foot and wasn't able to do the last few. I think, yeah, I only did the first training hike with them. And I couldn't do the last three. So But this year, because everybody's done it before they know what to expect. So their fitness is kind of up to them. I know some of them are not as fit as they were five years ago. Not sure where I am on the scale of fitness. I don't have a broken foot to recover from. So that's something, but I did do the Grind about a year ago, maybe and it was really, really hard. Every time I've done it. It's really, really hard. So I suspect it'll be really, really hard again. But it'll be fun to come together and do it as a group and just see where we're all at.

R

Rob Mineault 36:41

You guys are brave. I don't know. I've done that thing twice.

S

Shawn Marsolais 36:47

Oh, do you want to come on Saturday? No. I was thinking it'd be good to have someone there to take photos or video. You just have to jog ahead and you know.

R

Ryan Fleury 37:05

That's right. Gotta be in front of everybody. Yeah. And get the lower group and then run back up.

R

Rob Mineault 37:11

And then you can get the helicopter medivac getting me off the mountain. Yeah, no, for anybody who has never done it. It's a grind. They've named it aptly. I can't even describe it. It I remember the first time I did it, and it blew my mind. I mean, the person that I did it with kind of just pitched it as it's you know, it's a hiking trail. It's an intense hiking trail. It's a lot of hills but you know, that's that's kind of it. I really you can't you don't conceive of what it's actually like until you're on that thing. And, and there's, that's a thing, you know, once you get halfway. I mean, there's no easy way down. You can't really go down because you have people, all kinds of people coming up behind you.

S

Shawn Marsolais 38:08

And it's super steep. It's actually I feel like it'd be scarier going down.

S

Steve Barclay 38:13

They stopped allowing people going down the trail quite a while ago, because we're just so many people who got injured and had to be carried off the mountain. Yeah. Yeah, cuz you're to hurt yourself going downhill.

R

Rob Mineault 38:24

Yeah. Yeah. And you know, you're climbing over logs and stuff. Like it's just it's yeah, it's nuts.

S

Shawn Marsolais 38:29

Yeah. Yeah, we we got the youth to use hiking poles. And so instead of a white cane, I use a hiking pole. And we painted them. So they were white on top and red on the boat bottom to kind of look like a white cane. So because you can't use a cane, like properly on the grind. So at least you can sort of feel the height of the step because every step is different. It's not like, you know, manmade build steps. They're like, well, some of them are probably, but yeah, they're

just all different and different heights. And you know, your guide saying big step and one's up to your knee. And the next one's almost up to your hip, like some of them. It's crazy. So, but our hiking poles are cool.

S Steve Barclay 39:16
Did you know the record for all time for the Grouse Grind?

S Shawn Marsolais 39:20
It's like 25 minutes or something?

S Steve Barclay 39:23
23 minutes and 48 seconds.

S Shawn Marsolais 39:25
Yeah, that's disgusting.

S Steve Barclay 39:27
Sebastian Salas.

S Shawn Marsolais 39:31
I think there's a record for the person who's done it multiple times. I don't know how many times but somebody has gone up and down multiple times in the same day, or something. Like, why why? But you see people like jogging it. It's very confusing to me when I see that. Just like you're I'm panting and struggling with every step and then somebody just jogs by making it look easy. Like how how are you doing that?

R Rob Mineault 40:01
23 minutes that I can't even conceive of that,

S Shawn Marsolais 40:04
Because I think the average semi fit person can do it in an hour and a half. But it's always taken me at least two hours.

R

Rob Mineault 40:14

Yep. Yeah, I think that was my time to think was like two hours plus.

S

Shawn Marsolais 40:20

It is hard. I'm not super looking forward to it, I must admit. But you know, Rob wanted to do a podcast about the fifth year anniversary. So anything for the Limitless Podcast.

R

Rob Mineault 40:36

Well, hey, that's a good segue. Let's talk about the Limitless Podcast. How are how are things going over there with the Limitless Podcast?

S

Shawn Marsolais 40:44

Oh, they're going pretty well, I enjoy doing it. It would be nice to have a few more listeners. But I think we've, we took a couple weeks off in the summer, and come back with with some good stuff recently talked to a couple parents about preparing your child for kindergarten.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:03

That was a good episode.

S

Shawn Marsolais 41:08

And we are going to be doing an episode talking to some of the hikers who are doing the reunion hike this weekend. So that should be good. I'm sure we'll have some stories to share after our crazy hike on Saturday.

R

Rob Mineault 41:22

Well, now, the Limitless Podcast is much like this podcast in the sense that you guys are insane and do a weekly podcast as well. How do you find the schedule? Can it be hard coming up with topics on a weekly basis? How do you guys kind of deal with that? And sort of where do you generate ideas from?

S

Shawn Marsolais 41:53

So because our podcast, I'm the host, but I'm joined by a different youth or youth, multiple youths each each week. And so they're called our Limitless Committee. And they're all youth leaders and youth mentors. And we have monthly meetings where we kind of brainstorm ideas.

And you know, so I get input from them as well. Not all at all, their ideas are awesome. I wonder if they listen to this. Some of the ideas, maybe don't make it to an actual episode, or sometimes we steer them towards our blog, because we also have a blog. So if they come up with an idea that we think isn't like a full podcast conversation, we ask them to write a blog instead. And then, of course, Rob, and I talk about topics and come up with things. And there's lots and lots of interesting people to to interview out there. So we've kind of got an endless supply. It's just the work and hunting people down and asking them to come on and scheduling and that kind of thing. So yeah, every week is a lot in the beginning. I didn't find it a lot at all. I was just having so much fun. And it was kind of this new challenge. And it was exciting to see how many listeners and if it had grown, that would motivate me, I do find that when our members kind of level off I get a little discouraged or if numbers are down, I get a little discouraged. I love getting emails from listeners that makes my day every single time and makes me want to produce to create more, but it is hard every week. And you guys have been going for how many years?

R

Ryan Fleury 43:37

Seven.

S

Shawn Marsolais 43:38

Seven years.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:40

We had our 300th episode last week.

S

Shawn Marsolais 43:42

Wow, congrats. That's quite an accomplishment.

R

Rob Mineault 43:46

See how excited he is about it?

S

Shawn Marsolais 44:16

And that's, that's the interesting part of it all. Like you mentioned, there's a limitless supply of people to reach out to I'm not worried about that. What what gets me is like you I want I want better numbers, but also getting a response from people you've invited to the show. Like I can invite 10 people this week and get no answers back. Really not not one. And so I like to try and book my shows at least a month ahead. And I'm starting to panic now because I've still got an opening for the end of September. And I still really starting to be looking at October. Right just nobody's responding back to me. But, you know, that's just how I am, and you know, the shows

always come together, the guests always come up. So whether it's we have a topic or we talk about, you know, we each bring something to the show and rant for an hour, whatever it is, there will be a show. But like, you know, my expectations are, I want a guest, I want a good guest, I want the numbers to go up. I want email from our listeners, and none of that happens. But that's just the way it is like, you know, I talked to Rob weekly, and out of all the podcasts that are out there, you know, how many do you reply to? I don't reply to any none.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:37

Exactly. So how can I put expectations on those people? I don't do it myself.

S

Shawn Marsolais 45:43

Sure. I know, I never I've never rated a podcast. I subscribe, follow. But that's that's the extent of my support for my favorite podcast. So yeah, I know.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:55

It's interesting. It's fun. You know, it's definitely a passion project. I'm glad we do it. There's just like you said, there's so many people out there, there's so much information to get out and share with people that it is it is a joy to do. But it can be a chore. Yeah.

S

Shawn Marsolais 46:16

My stress is always when like right now, we don't have an episode for next week yet. And it's Tuesday today in recording land. And we release our episodes on Tuesdays. So I have to we have to record something in the next three days so that it can be edited and released next week. It sounds like if you're booking things a month in advance, do you ever get yourself into this bind of like, there's nothing for next week?

R

Ryan Fleury 46:44

Only when a guest cancels on me last minute, right. And then it's like, Rob, we need a show! Sometimes it just is what it is. That's happened occasionally.

R

Rob Mineault 46:56

Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes it's just yeah, that's just out of your control. And I mean, honestly, like you think about, like, a lot of podcasts out there. I mean, there's not a lot that actually do a weekly schedule, like we do. You know, a lot of them just kind of released when they release. They don't, they don't have a set schedule. And I think that people also consume podcasts a little different than then, you know, say you're consuming something like a Netflix show that's on every Tuesday. I mean, we're that's how we've kind of constructed our podcast. But I think

that we can sometimes put a lot more expectations on us than the audience actually does. But who knows, maybe maybe I'm wrong, but that there could very well be you know, Shan is out there every Wednesday, like waiting, waiting for the podcast.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:44

I'll speak to myself. I'm there every Tuesday morning looking for Limitless. And if it's not there, Rob gets an email. It's just you know, I like what you guys are doing. I want you guys to expand, you guys need to be national, not just provincial, because there's a need out there for that. Nobody else seems to be doing it. You know, there are so many youth, young adults, teens that are making change that are advocating like nobody's business. You know, I look at a lot of different organizations that are specific to blindness and envision impairments. And you know, the average age is 40 to 75. Right? Where are these youth advocates? Why? Why are we not seeing more change? You know, while because that group of people, they're not on the Tik Toks they're not on the hip, social media. Where these people are advocating, and these videos are going viral. And those are the youth that we need to reach out to get get out there in the mainstream. You know, like, I'll throw a name out there, Molly Burke, right. You know, doing commercials for dove? I think it was and you know, you on AMI, and you know, we've got some high profile people that are doing great work. And there needs to be more of that.

S

Shawn Marsolais 49:08

Yeah, I agree.

R

Rob Mineault 49:12

Hey, Molly Burke, you want to do do a podcast this week?

S

Shawn Marsolais 49:17

Yeah, we got an opening. You're recruiting for Limitless right now, right?

R

Rob Mineault 49:22

Right, right.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:23

Yeah, absolutely. We have a show next week. We're good.

R

Rob Mineault 49:29

You are our show. Well, I think I think we've reached the end of yet another appearance by

Shawn Marsolais on the AT Banter podcast. You know, hey, actually, before we let you go, yeah. I just want to say we need to we still need to do a 90s podcast. We teased the audience it because we did an 80s podcast awhile back. A year ago? We just we all sat around together and talked about the 80s.

S

Shawn Marsolais 50:26

We got to drink. We got to drink alcohol on that one.

R

Rob Mineault 50:29

Yeah. I'm surprised that Shawn you didn't actually put that in your rider for today's podcast. Better able to drink alcohol. But, we still we did tease it, I was like we should we should really do a 90s version of this.

S

Steve Barclay 50:46

Can we all do ecstasy for that one?

R

Rob Mineault 50:50

No, no, no. Yeah, anyways, okay, Shawn? Yeah. Could you tell the fine folks at home where they could find information about Blind Beginnings and if they are interested in buying a ticket for the fashion show?

S

Shawn Marsolais 51:11

Yeah. So you can find all the information about Blind Beginnings on our website, www.blindbeginnings.ca. That is also where you can purchase tickets, tickets will go on sale September 12. There are only 75 tickets there \$75 each. And I'm pretty sure it will sell out. So wait, don't wait, get your tickets, as soon as you can. There will also be a page on our website featuring the models. So you can read up on the nine models that will be in the show, and learn all you want about Blind Beginnings. We're also having a 50/50 draw as part of the event and that part is virtual, so you don't have to come to the event to purchase a 50/50 ticket. You can do that on the website as well. So www.blindbeginnings.ca. Purchase your tickets, purchase and 50/50 tickets read about our models read about Blind Beginnings. And you could even listen to the Limitless Podcast through the website as well.

R

Rob Mineault 52:08

Perfect. Look at that. Look at that.

S

Steve Barclay 52:11

 Steve Barclay 52:11

Yeah, that's a pro at work there. Yes.

 Rob Mineault 52:14

Well, listen, we want to thank you so much for taking some time out. And I'm coming on once again, a successful appearance and best of luck with the fashion show. And it's been very, very best of luck with the Grouse Grind next weekend. We'll we will be very interested to hear you on the other side of that.

 Shawn Marsolais 52:44

Thank you. I hope that I can still speak on the other side. It's always fun to hang out with you guys. Thanks for having me.

 Rob Mineault 52:51

Yeah. So there you go. See, now you guys know why I'm so busy.

 Ryan Fleury 52:57

Sounds like she's busy. I don't know what you're doing. I didn't hear you volunteering to do the Grind.

 Rob Mineault 53:08

There's no way I would do. There's no way.

 Ryan Fleury 53:13

One day, but I just there's I'm not in shape that I would die.

 Rob Mineault 53:18

I'm a complete moron for even doing it twice. Like the first time was a mistake. But after that, like I should have known better but then, you know, the someone invites you up a second time or like, and you have this revisionist history in your head where it's like, yeah, it wasn't that bad. And yeah, no, it was. I remember the second time was a blur. All I remember is like seeing the halfway marker and like just screaming at the sky. I thought it was near the top and it's like the half way, you have to be kidding me.



R Ryan Fleury 53:53

I'd probably cry.

R Rob Mineault 53:55

You do just sit down and cry because you can't go down. Yeah, all you can do is go up.

R Ryan Fleury 54:00

Yeah, well, that was that's the part that would ruin me. Not being able to turn around and go down and quit. Right. Once you're committed, you're going.

R Rob Mineault 54:11

Exactly. It's terrible.

R Ryan Fleury 54:12

One day.

S Steve Barclay 54:15

But yeah, we'll take you to the Coquitlam crunch first round first.

R Ryan Fleury 54:21

Yes, that's been actually my plan for a few years now. Let's do that first. Yeah. See if I can actually handle that.

R Rob Mineault 54:28

Yeah, cuz that's a that's a lot easier. I don't think I've ever done it either. But here you go. Yep, there you go. Well, well, and then what do you think, guys?

R Ryan Fleury 54:41

Oh, that's great. They're doing something that you know, I don't I don't know has ever been done before, probably not here in Canada. Anyway. So I'd like to have you know, Shawn, and perhaps some models on after the Fashion Show is said and done and just ask them about their experiences.

R

Rob Mineault 55:00

Yeah, I do, I do feel like that's going to be a real transformative experience for some of those kids. And I don't even think that they maybe even realize it yet. Because it would be really terrifying to do and doing something that that that's scary. It's such an important moment in, you know, a young life and not a lot of people get a chance to do something like that.

R

Ryan Fleury 55:26

Yeah, like you said, it's gonna be very, I think, it could be life changing. It's one thing to, you know, let's say walk across the stage during a graduation, hear you are now walking in red carpet, or, you know, whatever you're doing, but you're walking in front of an audience with cameras flashing, music pumping, you know, it's going to be chaotic. And, you know, you're trying to control your guide dog, and there's just, you're gonna be sensory overload. So, yeah, it's gonna be an experience, for sure.

R

Rob Mineault 55:59

Well, and that's, you know, like I said that even organizationally, like this is something that, that Blind Beginnings is trying, that's, you know, they don't have a template to follow, they're adapting this as they go. It's a challenge on all different levels. But, you know, that's, that's kind of Blind Beginnings motto is that, you know, what they try to instill in youth is that look, you gotta, you got to step outside of your box and do something that's going to be a little bit scary, and you're not really sure if you know how it's going to work out. But you got to try it anyways. And, you know, you know, it's important to do that on on all different levels. And it's great that, you know, the community can come out and support regardless of how things go, because that's the message that you really want to, you know, instill in the public is that, you know, the possibilities are limitless, you can do whatever you want, if you put your mind to it.

R

Ryan Fleury 56:59

And if you're given the opportunity, and I think that's the important part, right? You're you're given someone the opportunity to step outside of their boundaries, to show off their talents, their skills, their passion, and let them be themselves.

R

Rob Mineault 57:13

Yep. Try something new. Try something new and scary.

R

Ryan Fleury 57:18

Take that Fashion Week.

R

Rob Mineault 57:20

Yeah, that's right. Hey, Ryan? Rob? Where can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 57:27

They can find us at blind beginning sorry, wrong show. They can find us www.atbanter.com.

R

Rob Mineault 57:35

They can also drop us an email if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com.

S

Steve Barclay 57:45

And if they are so inclined and excited by them social media things we can be found on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook as well.

R

Rob Mineault 57:53

That's right. And that's gonna do it for us this week. Thanks, everybody for listening in. And of course big thanks to our good friend and boss, Shawn Marsolais for joining us this week. And we will see everybody next week.