

# 33. Todd Castleberry and Meredith Fisher: Good Health and Gratitude

## **Gavin Kelly**

You're listening to beyond 1894, a podcast dedicated to updating you on research, innovation and campus life happening at Louisiana Tech University.

## **Teddy**

Hey, everybody, thanks for joining us on Beyond 1894. Will we introduce the members of the Tech family here at Louisiana Tech tell you what they're doing to make your world a better place. This is Teddy Allen. I'm your host today. I'm on the team at University Communications and we're joined by Meredith Fisher, who's a student here Meredith. So head to the world world. Meredith. There's Meredith. And then we got Dr. Todd Castleberry. How you doing there? Sir?

## **Todd Castleberry**

I am living the dream.

## **Teddy**

Living the dream! So am I. I'm vertical, got a few people like y'all who care about and I'm employed, can it get much better than that? Alright, today we're going to talk about some grants that we're doing over in kinesiology, where Dr. Todd and Meredith are dug in. Let's start with this though. Todd, tell us where you're from and what your exact title is.

## **Todd Castleberry**

I'm originally from Baton Rouge. But I have some family ties to Louisiana Tech. And my exact title is Assistant Professor of Kinesiology

## **Teddy**

right. And you graduated from

## **Todd Castleberry**

Louisiana Tech. That is where my undergrad is from? I bleed blue and red. Yes, you do. And your family does T don't they? That is correct. My brother went to school here. His he met his wife who attended here as well. And me and my wife went to school here.

## **Teddy**

How long have y'all been married? That wasn't a Canadian. It hasn't been more than four years.

## **Todd Castleberry**

It has okay. It was 2012. So Matt is nine years.

## **Teddy**

Okay, beautiful. I'll ask you more questions that personal. Don't forget Christmas is coming up. You can only get her present.

**Meredith Fisher**

Okay, babies, too.

**Teddy**

Yep, we're gonna. We're gonna talk about the little babies. You're going to go spend time with a little baby this afternoon. As soon as we get through with this. Thank you all for taking the time. Meredith Fisher, tell us where you're from.

**Meredith Fisher**

I am from Shreveport, Louisiana. So not too far. Just about an hour and 15 away. What high school? I went to magnet Caddo Magnet High School beautiful, great school.

**Teddy**

It is. What made you come to tech?

**Meredith Fisher**

Oh, gosh, I'd say Well, the first thing that pulled me in was the kinesiology department actually came to BIP see local college and this report area. And they gave a presentation on just how awesome the kinesiology department is and why students should choose kinesiology or why they should choose tech. So I was really I was kind of deciding what I wanted to do as a major, but that really just kind of drew me in. And as soon as I saw them and met the professors, that was the first thing I was like, Yep, this is where I'm going.

**Teddy**

So in like five years, where do you envision yourself being?

**Meredith Fisher**

Well, the dream would be physical therapy school. Maybe stay around this area? Maybe I think my top choice maybe be New Orleans? LSU. That would be awesome. Maybe St. Augustine and Florida or Houston. But yeah, that's about four year ish from now. I'll hopefully be graduated from then and moving on into the world.

**Teddy**

Well, we're glad that you chose to spend your undergrad with us. If you go to sign org, that's awesome. And Houston's real crowded, New Orleans is cool. Oh, yeah. If you anyway, wherever you land, they'll be lucky to have you and why would I? Why would that be a true statement taught about Miss Fisher about wherever she goes, they're going to be lucky to have this one.

**Todd Castleberry**

Oh, she's extremely driven. She helps out she goes above and beyond with anything that's available always wanting to do more specially loves the research. And with PT being a doctor at you do have

projects, you always want to further your career and help better the world. So you start that with research.

**Meredith Fisher**

And that's why he's writing my recommendation letter.

**Teddy**

Beautiful. Plus, she's willing to serve She is the president of Alpha Omega. Am I correct? Yes, sir. All right, let's get down to some stuff that we're helping out with to make the world better. One of them is a \$25,000 grant approved to tech for an interdisciplinary project to research and implement new ways to protect police officers health. And you know, the stereotype is they would be unhealthy because right Donna's drinking coffee to sit but that's not the deal. Tell us why police officers why this is a good group to study. Well, this is a good group, because besides the fact that they're protecting us and their public service,

**Todd Castleberry**

and that and that's how I see it as well. The healthier they are, the more they're working on the streets. And that means the safer that me and my family are as well. So not to be selfish, but I like the community to be safer. So in order to do that, is to encourage the ones that do protect us to be a little healthier.

**Teddy**

Okay. Who else is helping you? Oh, you're the you're the principal investigator?

**Todd Castleberry**

Yes, sir. We also have Kirk sentiment, right, who is one of our English professors here at Louisiana Tech. We have Liz Angelelli at Marquette University and we also have Jacqueline Garrison who is at Grambling.

**Teddy**

Okay, so Marquette and Grambling. In us, how did they get involved?

**Todd Castleberry**

Oh, I wanted to reach out to a Department of Social Work. So Grambling State University has a school of social work. And I reached out to them because a lot of police agencies have been moving towards including social workers into the police funding. So there's a lot of big movements out there, a lot of cities have now started including social workers going on a lot of calls, especially domestic calls. We wanted to see really what what that encompasses. And we wanted to include that.

**Teddy**

In this study started when

**Todd Castleberry**

this study started, probably last year, when another colleague of mine Dr. Jean chin, who is now at Western Kentucky, she decided to study the motivation of police officers health. And after following up on that study, we realized real quickly that not all law enforcement officers are healthy. Stereotypically, most of them are not healthy. And we wanted to follow up with that, how can we get them healthy, and there was a grant offered from the Louisiana BlueCross BlueShield Foundation. And we applied for it. And we received that award for 25,000 to study and incorporate health and fitness plans for law enforcement

### **Teddy**

and we still have a few more months to go. We do Yes, sir. It's a year long program. And yeah, and you tell Meredith whenever you need her to jump in here, but when he explained to me what police are facing as far as not fistfights and all that kind of stuff, but just the rigors of the job that we might not think about that would cause her health to suffer. If I'm guessing, I'm guessing maybe 12 hours in a car, something one day,

### **Todd Castleberry**

absolutely 12 hours in a car is very difficult. It's a sedentary lifestyle. And one, I'll give an anecdotal. We had a police officer that was involved in one of our blood pressure studies last year. That told me a story about he was in a fight like a little scrap wrestling it with a an individual in a front yard somewhere. And backup was he said estimated about two minutes away and two minutes when you're in a fight. That is a very long time. And this officer was obese, unhealthy was tiring out very quickly while this individual was reaching for his firearm. He told me that he was petrified at that moment that he wasn't going to be able to go home to his wife and kids. He was scared for his life. And he was able to get the individual pinned, backup arrived, they arrested him. But at that moment, he decided he needs to get healthier in order to protect the community and to protect himself as well. And I thought that was an excellent motivation. And I use that story as much as possible.

### **Teddy**

There walk around with the the duty belt on to and that weighs 20 or 30 pounds, it's you never think about

### **Meredith Fisher**

Yeah, we actually just finished a study on that we wanted to look at the difference between a duty vest and a traditional duty belt. Because a lot of the times that duty belt weighs a lot. And it's causing them a lot of problems, like back problems and some of them having surgery and even having to step out of the field because they have to recover from the surgery. So we wanted to see if we could evenly distribute the weight with a vest and make them wear that more to see if they can kind of help their health problems. So we've always been very interested in their safety and their health. Because if they're good and if they're fit and they feel confident then they will be better at their job.

### **Teddy**

What's been the reaction from our local law enforcement gang?

### **Meredith Fisher**

I think a lot of them have been very surprised with their results. So kind of it's kind of an eye opener for them because they are realizing just how important if not more than they already knew that their job is to the whole public. So I mean, their job is really hard. They have to be able to react to a lot of things very difficult and I mean even not even half of a second. So just them realizing just how difficult that really is. Is is a really big eye opener.

### **Teddy**

Boy on the best days on Minister tough, almost impossible job. So God love him for for serving. Is there anything else you want to talk about about that particular program before we zip along to what else y'all got going on? Tell us what aren't then if you said, Hey, Todd, I got a kid here my morning come to school and studied Kinesiology. With you and, and Miss Fisher. What would you tell him we got going on over there. That would be exciting that a high school student would not be aware that some of this stuff y'all would have.

### **Meredith Fisher**

So one fun thing, I'm a student recruiter, so I give tours on campus. So oftentimes, whenever I'm talking about the kinesiology department department, I am hyping them up as much as possible, though, one of the most go to things that I will say is I'll ask them if they've ever seen avatar. And usually if you've seen the behind the scenes of Avatar, you see them in like the little morph suits with like the probes on them. And we actually have something like that one of our labs, one of our professors is doing research where someone will put on a suit like that, and they can detect everything and they can jump off a plate and see exactly what muscles are moving, how much they're weighing, really the nitty gritty things and details that people that they won't think about. So I always tell them if they want to put on a suit like in Avatar movies, they're welcome to come to our department

### **Teddy**

that would light him up. We got it going on over there. So okay, tell us what else is happening in Kinesiology. I know y'all got tons of grants and things y'all are working on. We do.

### **Todd Castleberry**

We've got a lot of opportunity. I can say that to any high schooler I would say we have opportunity. We know we say it ad nauseum that we're a family. But included with that family is we do everything together. And because we have so much research and state of the art equipment going on. We even last year, we had a first quarter freshmen that was helping out with our studies. So right from the get go, they can be a part of it, okay, and we're not going to wait for you to volunteer, we're coming to you.

### **Meredith Fisher**

They really do a good job of making you feel included and making the students aware, aware of what's out there and how much they want to help you. We just had a talk with some of our professors, we were just taking a picture with all the Chinese students and the head of the department, Dr. Umansky and Miss Umansky. They're like, Guys, what can we do to improve our department? What would you like to see? So they really want our input. And they kept reiterating that we are really here to serve you and that a lot of the other universities, a lot of times their professors are like you're here to serve us, you're

here to make our numbers look better. But they really want to hit hard on the fact that they are here for us and our futures and they want to help in any way they can.

**Teddy**

They are, they are sincere. The Snowman skis are glad to have them. While you're thinking about Meredith, if there's any other study you might think people might be interested in. Think well, I asked Todd because Todd is we're heading up on Thanksgiving. We all got so much to be thankful for you and your precious wife had a child and tell us how what you learned from that and the complications that were involved in why this season is probably you're probably more grateful than than you ever have been?

**Todd Castleberry**

Absolutely. This is definitely a new thanksgiving for us back in March. I left work after teaching a grad class. I think it was our first class of the quarter. And I went home she wasn't feeling well. I took her blood pressure. It was through the roof. I took it again just to make sure it was just as bad it was accurate and we went to the emergency room. She stayed overnight waiting to see the physician the next morning. And I thought we were going to leave and we didn't 10 days later, she delivered our precious ret James at 25 weeks and six days is when he was born at one pound 2.7 ounces micro preemie and he is a miracle baby if there is one. After two weeks of being in the NICU in Monroe, he was airlifted to Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital in Baton Rouge for possible NEC and he did have medical neck. We needed to consult with surgery. Tell us what that means. NEC necrotizing Intestinal enterocolitis I believe it hurt where it's in the stomach guy and that is when the digestive tract isn't necessarily working in medical neck is like with a secondary ileus means that it just wasn't really working. But it wasn't. It wasn't actually necrotizing I guess it wasn't dead. So he didn't have to have surgery many babies do. He didn't have to have surgery. We were very lucky for that. But after four and a half months of the NICU. We were finally discharged at the end of July. And he was put on some medications. We had home oxygen as well. And just this past week, we are able to take the oxygen off during the day except he only needs it during a nap and overnight

**Teddy**

boom. Yeah. God bless him. How much do we wait now?

**Todd Castleberry**

He is 13 pounds. 11 ounces. Oh,

**Teddy**

great. Well, we're lucky to have read in the game, that's for sure. Yes, thank you. Good for y'all. Okay, you don't have any children. D. Meredith? Okay. Okay. Thank goodness. I'm only 20. Okay. Any other thing that you could think of that you'd want to tell a prospective student that y'all have going on?

**Meredith Fisher**

Um, I mean, we have really just a wide area of different research studies. I know. What we mainly have been focused on recently is studies with police officers. But I know Mr. Szymanski has been doing research with the baseball team. So a ton of ways to help improve their team and really innovative stuff

that no one else is doing. We also have a psychology, sports psychology, psychology research going on. They have their own lab. They're researching people with Parkinson's and how much they're moving around throughout the day. Also really getting into some fun stuff about family dynamics in sports. So looking at siblings in sports, and also really looking at how COVID affected families and sports. So a lot of cool things like that family dynamics and how relationships work in sport. Beautiful.

**Teddy**

Can people ask just to come see everything that's down there? Like I've seen our pitchers throw, Lane Burgess, Diamond Dogs, pitchers come up there and throw and of course, it immediately gives you a reading and spin right and all this kind of stuff. Can you call it apartment lineup site? Can I come by and see what all y'all got?

**Meredith Fisher**

Well, we have a tour that goes out for the university every day at eight o'clock and at 130 1:30pm. So after our recruiters are giving tours of the campus, we send them out into their colleges and the departments to kind of take it from there and give them a tour of the colleges as well.

**Teddy**

Okay. We all be thinking in these last couple minutes. If there's anything else you want to share. I will say that if I own the business, I would hire Meredith Fisher and find something for today. Let's agree that yes, she's a good one. Okay. You also like the arts? Correct?

**Meredith Fisher**

Oh, yeah. I actually grew up since I was two years old doing musical theater and the community. So yeah, I actually just did a show this past summer with my with my company in Shreveport. So it's been something I've always loved to do. What did y'all do this summer? So we just did Matilda. The musical? Was that it Yemen hook. It was okay. Did you go see?

**Teddy**

I did not but I didn't know you, you know, had to do the mask and all that kind of thing.

**Meredith Fisher**

No, we didn't have to wear masks on stage, which was very awesome. Well, we, we had to we had to be tested for tourists. And it was preferred that we were vaccinated. But yeah, we didn't have to do we didn't have to wear masters. Very

**Teddy**

nice. Okay. Can you tell us two or three other musicals you were in growing up? Oh, gosh.

**Meredith Fisher**

I don't know if you've ever heard of Chicago. It's a famous movie. Yeah, we did Chicago. Something called chorus

**Teddy**

line. Yeah. Watch chorus line the other night.

**Meredith Fisher**

I was well, in case you know, any of the characters. Yeah, we really like to do a lot of Disney shows. Really anything you can think of? I bet you I've been in it.

**Teddy**

When you did. Chicago. Did you Did Chicago St. Portal theater are where it was

**Meredith Fisher**

at the Art station? Downtown. Yeah. So it wasn't wish report little theater or company name is called station or LA. And that's we've been putting on shows downtown.

**Teddy**

I'll get some more information from me on that. The downtown place. What's the name of it is really nice. So well, there's

**Meredith Fisher**

an image hook. That's the church. There is called called yet, but we call it the art station. It's a very neat place. And it's just a big old space. We can turn into

**Teddy**

something good man there.

**Meredith Fisher**

That was our company. Whoa. Yeah.

**Teddy**

It's awesome. All right, Todd. Let's have your background and musicals.

**Todd Castleberry**

I love doing something. Don't threaten me, Hamilton all day long.

**Teddy**

Well, look, we're grateful that y'all took time today you got anything else you want to say to wrap things up, Todd, I know. Again, your family bleeds tech blue and you love it here and you make the make the world a better place for people like Meredith and myself. Anything you want to say to.

**Todd Castleberry**

One thing I would like to add with all of our studies and the number of studies we have in the pipeline with law enforcement, the amount of positive feedback that we've received from the community and more specifically from those officers. It's been unmatched. It's wonderful and And one thing surprising to me, it shouldn't have been, but it was surprising is the amount of officers that want to be better, right? They want to improve. If they can do something better, they will do anything in everything that they can



to do it if we were bringing in state of the art equipment to help train them, helping them with their fitness as well. Anything that can help them be better at their job and better representatives of the community. They want to do it. They are at the forefront of trying to be better there in this community. And I know this, we've had our problems in North Louisiana and rural Louisiana. But the ones that are coming through our lab, they want to be better and they're not going to wait for something bad to happen to improve. They're going to do it beforehand. They are trying their hardest.

**Teddy**

That's great news because they feel fit physically. They have to use their brain so much to make snap decision. Absolutely. Well, that's good for them. And then that helps us and interdisciplinary. Education is what's making that work. Great to meet you. Great to meet you, too. Meredith Fisher present Miss press man. Great to see you again. Tom. Tom has reminded me that 100 years ago, I interviewed him for a little promo piece we did here at Tech when he was a student of prom when he was a promising young man that was

**Todd Castleberry**

about 100 years ago. Well, I'm

**Teddy**

glad you're here to spread the Kinesiology love. If you got any questions, give us a call. Go to logitech.edu Search for Ken nice until the next time is Teddy Allen.

**Gavin Kelly**

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