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Living a life of Significance

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Life Off and On the Stage

Oftentimes when trying to figure out how to make it through life, we look to someone who we have a great amount of care and respect for. Someone who most of the time helped us through our younger years and pushed us to be better visions of ourselves. These people are found through family friends, upperclassmen, coworkers, organization leaders, and several other weird places and experiences that make up our lives. However, most people look up to a teacher. Teachers have a huge impact on lives, especially teachers that taught us during rough years of our lives. Mrs. Jane Ganey is a teacher that had a huge impact on me during my senior year, and while everyone in the theater department was nervous about switching teachers, she is a jem unlike any other and I was so happy to interview her.

I asked her about her life and if she always wanted to be a teacher. Her immediate answer of no shocked me. Originally she had a Job at Alabama Theater Company stage managing for the productions however Ganey described the intimidating and not liking the large amount of traveling with adult actors. Her first ever glimpse into the teaching world was when her high school director told her of a job opportunity at Thomson High School for an assistant theater position. At first, it didn’t look like she was going to do the majority of the teaching until the theater director at Thomson transferred school for a better opportunity. The principal gave her the option of teaching or staying, she chose to teach, and the rest in history. Ganey describes teaching as being “super rewarding [but] it’s hard. Like, it sucks, sometimes it’s just so hard… Some days you come and you’re like ‘I really am the worst person in the world.’ More times than not but knowing I have kids that are out there working in the industry, doing their passion that they started that I helped cultivate in their early stages of life. That’s kind of cool.'' Despite not thinking it at first, Ganey has found her passion through helping others find theirs. By being a leader for younger artists, she has found great reward in others finding out who they are.

When Ganey had first gotten the job, she had no teaching education so she went to UAB for teaching. When asked if she thought the extra two to four years of classes were worth it, she responded with, “I do, now, I think it was worth it. Back then, I had no idea what I was getting into and I just needed a job. I knew that if I knew theater, I could teach theater. Like, if you know it, you can teach it, right?” Ganey also commented that all she felt like she was doing was “passing my passion off to young kids in hopes that it may stick.” Obviously the arts are taught much differently than other classes. These are classes ment to give people the tools they need to express themselves in a way that feels right to them. This is especially crucial for kids who need an outlet or somewhere to feel safe. The theater department can provide that and it seems Ganey has found a place in which she gives others that sense of belonging and passion that she feels, even though at first it was just a job.

Ganey is married with two kids and when I asked her about it she remarked about how hard it is to keep up with. She talked about how it’s not like a constant battle of kids everywhere but a battle between feeling like you’re doing enough in each place. However, she confided that the key is a strong foundation which she has founded in her parents and husband. When it comes to her family, she says, “I really try to take those moments as sparing as they come,” this includes taking her kids to school or to events over the summer, etc. Ganey puts an emphasis on those little moments and how important they are, and when you’re in those moments put everything you can into them. When I asked,“so, the reward is greater then the task?” she said, “yes.”

Ganey mentioned finding a mentor in her high school theater director. She apparently still calls him over the phone and she used to go to his house for dinner every so often. He became a close family friend and has helped her even past high school with her career in theater. One piece of advice that he gave to Ganey that she has given to me is, “Nothing is ever too much, it can feel too much but nothing’s ever really too much. There’s either, A, always people around that you can either talk to or help decomprese or there’s always the option to relax.” I was always wound up and in my own head in high school and apparently Ganey was as well. This piece of advice is golden because it reminds people like us to put everything into something small that stepping back is an option. However, the one thing Ganey said that her theater director really instilled in her was to take risks. Ganey to this day is a avide risk taker and she encourages others to do the same. Especially in the teaching and theater business, taking risks is all you can really do to hope to make an impact. Whether it’s going in for an audition or helping a student through a hard day, taking risks is a part of her life.

All and all, Ganey is a teacher who believes in helping kids find their passions. Through hard work, dedication, and help from those around her, she has been able to make an impact on so many kids that have walked through her door. I look forward to seeing all the new artists and artistic leaders that were able to say, “yeah, I worked with Ganey in high school.”

Works Cited

Ganey, Jane. Interview. Conducted by Islay Brady, 5 October 2022.