

Margaret Lee

Bennis Leadership Accelerator

Dr. Donna Chrobot-Mason & Dean Marianne Lewis

December 6th, 2022

### A Very Reflective Surprise Party

As I open the door, a group of close friends and family jump out and scream, “Surprise!” I walk into a room filled with memories, artifacts, and photos of accomplishments from the last ten years. As I look around the room, I reflect on what led to creating a weeklong service immersion trip. It started after attending Arizona State University to obtain a Master's in Community Resources and Development funded through the Truman Scholarship.

My favorite courses were “Statistical and Data Analysis,” “Research Methods,” and “Community Services Management.” These courses provided in-depth background and actionable ways to conduct research and development in a community. I used those classes not only in my future but during my time at ASU, conducting a study on campus to identify how COVID had changed the motivation of community engagement among undergraduate students. Several departments are now using that data to establish a variety of programming to engage current students in community service while helping them discover their spark for service. A couple of years later, I saw students engaging with the programs created and saw that light in their eyes and a feeling of belongingness at ASU because of my work.

Personally, ASU pushed me out of my comfort zone. I was now a flight away from my relationship, family, and friends. I had to start over by building a new support network. Starting

over in a new environment, I regularly attended graduate support groups and meetings of a service club called Circle K while balancing a part-time graduate assistantship, ensuring I paid my bills. It took much work to find the friends I have now sitting next to me, celebrating everything these 30 years of my life have brought. My time at ASU was the starting block in which I dove into the pool of my future.

Reflecting is hard work, so I transitioned to the kitchen for some snacks, where I saw the magnet of Arizona Youth Partnership, where I got my first job after graduating. Memories and emotions came rushing back; the frantic stress of applying to jobs and calls to my mom, either crying because of the ambiguity of being an adult paying for an apartment or excited because I got an interview. After a couple of months, I got my first full time job as a youth development specialist for Arizona Youth Partnership, assisting in developing programming for their middle school through high school-aged students. My job was able to utilize the research I had done for my master's degree and the experiences I had in my undergraduate career.

While assisting in developing youth programs, I also included the students I was serving in the decision-making and provided them the opportunities to share input and opinions. I regularly sought feedback after events from the participants and would reach out to co-workers about how to improve as a leader. I also utilized the professional development budget to attend various conferences, such as the national service-learning conference to share ideas and enhance programs and Greenleaf Servant Leader Conference for personal leadership development. The three years I was at AYP started me on the journey of becoming self-sufficient as an adult.

Now, what is a self-sufficient human? As a person who holds herself to higher standards, I decided that meant having insurance, car payments, and apartment payments all figured out, and that's what I strived to do. I had my full-time job while apartment searching, which was

within my budget, buying a car, and working with the insurance company through AYP. A couple of times, I didn't budget my money correctly, so I needed to contact my parents for assistance. It took more or less two years of trial and error, having the correct phone calls to discover what it meant to be a self-sufficient human. Just to think that 20-year-old Margaret was just getting a taste of that at UC.

As I grabbed the pretzel bites, I flashed to the second magnet on my fridge, picturing Washington, D.C. A sigh let out; I took a risk and started over across the country again to take a job with a youth advocacy organization that worked with legislators to advocate for youth in policy decisions. It allowed me to practice my strategies in Arizona, gathering community stakeholders to hear the root needs instead of what we assumed the community needed. It was also where I discovered the privileges men got, and women were left out. I noticed this in my research; my male co-worker would get credit and be invited to meetings to present. I would apply for small promotions, and I was passed over multiple times because of my gender. It felt like more of an uphill battle, and the reward did not seem worth it. The results would take months to years, and I struggled to see how the community valued my work. The experience was valuable for collaborating with the community, researching, and advocating, which helped me in the next step of life.

As I left the kitchen, I sat in the living room with a glass of wine. One of my friends from UC saw the yellow bandana with pictures and artifacts and asked me the story behind it. That was the achievement I was most proud of and was my current initiative with my third job and current job as VP of character development and programs at Because I Said I Would in Cleveland, OH. The bandana was a souvenir participant taken home from a service leadership trip called Breakthrough Cleveland. I worked with a team of college students and co-workers to

have the first-year trial of a program for high school students where students flew to Miami, Florida, and served a variety of nonprofits to learn about different types of service. The trip was guided by, and the curriculum was based on a book called Toxic Charity. It is modeled after a similar journey that changed my life and showed how I don't need to have a title to be a leader and to make a difference. I utilized perspectives of the variety of experiences that my team members had to create and implement this trip. I took to heart the impact the trip made on the high school version of me and its purpose to impact those students and their journey in community engagement. At the same time, it is still developing and working to be a signature project for the charity. The most significant factor for me was the feedback received and the difference they made in their community due to that trip.

That thought ringing in my mind brought me back to celebrating 30 years on this earth, serving others, and advocating for youth engagement. Looking around, seeing all the friends and family who showed up to honor those accomplishments and were there every step of the way. The cake was brought out, candles were lit, and as I blew them out, I wished for 30 more years of staying true to my nature of serving others and creating opportunities for youth to engage with the community.

**Leadership Action Plan**

<b>Behavioral Goal</b>	<b>Developmental Activities</b>	<b>Support /Feedback Needed</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Results/Outcomes</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reflection</b></p>	<p>Create a google form for daily reflection/inventory of what I did at work. After each performance, the review reflects on my progress in the role. Each year I have a document that is a year of learning from my position.</p>	<p>Make a reminder on my phone to do the daily reflection. Put an event on my calendar immediately after the performance review.</p>	<p>Each month check in with me to see how reflection I have been doing. Take stock of what is working and what is not working about my reflection methods.</p>	<p>Reflection is always something I do so I can easily pull the value from the experiences I have participated in. I don't have to think about it.</p>
<p><b>Editing/Revision</b></p>	<p>Scheduling time to read through and edit projects. Adding an hour to the project timeline to accommodate that time for editing.</p>	<p>Ask co-workers/project team to remind them to add time for revising.</p>	<p>During my performance reviews gathering feedback on my work. Check in monthly to see how my revision edits were going and if scheduling time is working.</p>	<p>Revising my work is part of the routine of doing a project.</p>

<b>Saying No</b>	Make a list of the commitments for the week. After being asked, take 24 hours before saying yes.	Create a spreadsheet with what I was asked and when an answer needs to be given. Write on my note's app of my commitments.	Each week while looking at the list of commitments, ask if there is something I could delegate or say no to.	The activities I say yes to will be meaningful or necessary. The yes will have more intention than before.
------------------	--	--	--	--