

Agency for Change Podcast: DeMoine Adams, CEO TeamMates Mentoring

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DeMoine Adams

At TeamMates, we help communities work as a team to show young people that they are the home team, and we are here to help you reach your full potential.

Announcer:

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lisa Bowen:

There are a few names more well known to Nebraskans than Tom Osborne, head coach of the Nebraska Cornhuskers football team for 25 years. Aside from a staggering number of victories during his time as coach, Osborne contributed something else to the legacy of the state, the TeamMates Mentoring Program. Founded in 1991 by Osborne and his wife, Nancy, the program was designed to improve the academic success of local middle school students by pairing them with Husker football players who acted as their mentors. Over 30 years later, TeamMates has grown from that first Lincoln chapter to an organization spanning five states and serving thousands of students from third grade on up.

Lisa Bowen:

Today, you're going to hear why mentoring is so important to students of all ages, the kinds of skills a mentor should have, and how you can get involved and apply to be a mentor yourself, so stick around until the end because there's more to come.

Lisa Bowen:

Hi, everyone. This is Lisa Bowen, vice president, managing director at KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. Today's guest is DeMoine Adams, CEO of TeamMates Mentoring which works to positively impact the world by inspiring students to reach their full potential through mentoring.

Lisa Bowen:

DeMoine, I've heard a lot about TeamMates recently, and I really believe that more people need to know more about the great impact you're having on the communities that you serve, so thank you for taking time to be here with us today.

DeMoine Adams:

Well, thank you. I'm very excited for more people to learn about the impact that we're making in the lives of so many young people across the state of Nebraska and four other states.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. For our listeners, DeMoine, who may not have heard of TeamMates Mentoring, can you describe what it is and who benefits from the services?

DeMoine Adams:

Yes. TeamMates is a school based one-to-one mentoring program where we have volunteers from the community that are matched with a young person, grades 3rd through 12th grade, and all meetings take place at the school during the school day. It started 31 years ago by co-founders Tom and Nancy Osborne with the Lincoln Public School District, with 22 middle school students matched with 22 football players and, out of those 22, 21 of those students graduated from high school on time and 18 of them went on to pursue some form of post-secondary education.

DeMoine Adams:

Now, since the program has grown, we had to look outside of the football team and we asked members from the Lincoln community to serve as mentors. Here we are, 31 years later, we're serving over 10,000 youth, which means that we have over 10,000 volunteers that have signed up to be mentors to these young people. We are serving 193 school districts, 150-plus in Nebraska, six in South Dakota, four in Wyoming, 13 in Kansas, and 28 in the state of Iowa.

Lisa Bowen:

That is amazing. I think most people didn't realize that you go beyond the borders of Nebraska, too, which is great. Great. Great.

DeMoine Adams:

Yes. Yes. When we say our mission is to impact the world, we're not trying to impact every state, the entire country, so to speak, but there are so many students that we feel can be impacted, can be influenced in a positive way through that one-to-one time with an additional caring adult. We try to do it one student at a time, and I think that is what gives us that quality side of what we do. It's not about the numbers, which we want to serve more students, but we want to do it in a way to where those students that participate in our program can one day become mentors themselves. I think, overall, they are the ones that would truly impact the world in the future, but we have to do it through role models. That's where we take our pride in is really empowering communities, partnering with school districts to create these villages and so many communities to inspire students to reach their full potential.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. DeMoine, let's talk a little bit about you personally and your story. How did you originally get involved in TeamMates? I know that you played for the Huskers and that's where it all started, but can you talk a little bit about your path?

DeMoine Adams:

When I was a football player here at the University of Nebraska, I learned early how important it was for football players to see themselves as role models and to really think about what they do not just on the field but off the field. There was an opportunity for me to use my time on a weekly basis to serve as a mentor, so I was a TeamMates mentor for three years as a student athlete, and then, of course, after Nebraska football, I chased the dream of playing a little professional football, and one day I had to get a

real job, and that's when I moved back to Lincoln, Nebraska, worked at the university, worked with Susan Buffett scholarship, recipients helping them to get to and through college by having that scholarship, by providing them with the resources and the support that they need to persist.

DeMoine Adams:

Then TeamMates, at the time, they were giving away a few scholarships, but they wanted to give away more and they wanted to expand mentoring through college, and that's when I had the opportunity through Suzanne Hince, who was the executive director at that time. She is Tom and Nancy's daughter. I was able to get involved again through TeamMates by actually working for TeamMates, and so, mentoring, I would say, for me, I learned the value of it as a football player. Now, it has become a part of my life. My wife is a mentor. Our children are mentees. Our oldest is a mentee in college, and she is also a mentor to a young person. Mentoring is really who we are. It's not just a job. This is just a way of life for me.

Lisa Bowen:

That's great. When you started as a mentor way back then, did you ever think you'd be CEO?

DeMoine Adams:

I've always been someone who was humble. I pictured myself playing in the NFL as long as Tom Brady, but just in terms of being in this position, I've always just wanted to do something that was meaningful, to give back, to serve. I just have a heart and a passion for helping students see their potential, reach their full potential despite the obstacles or their background.

DeMoine Adams:

I am a first-generation student. I was very fortunate to get a scholarship, to play football, but received quality education at the University of Nebraska, and so I want to do all I can to help other students to have that same, or if not, access to opportunities, to resources so they, too, can reach their full potential. So many students believe in students without promise, but we believe in all students. We believe all students have potential, and so we want to make sure that we give every student who wants a mentor that opportunity to be influenced by an additional positive caring adult so that they can have that hope for the future, increase their sense of wellbeing and stay engaged so that they can stay in school and graduate from high school.

Lisa Bowen:

Amazing. Amazing. We know you've had an amazing athletic career that's brought you lots of opportunities. I'm curious about how being an athlete helped prepare you for your current role. Are there any particular skills you think translated really well from the field to the office?

DeMoine Adams:

So many when it comes to work ethic, when it comes to being resilient, when it comes to teamwork, working as a team player, commitment, integrity, discipline. These are all things that I believe help and has helped me to get to where I'm at. Culture I think is important on a football team, and so being able to create a very positive, inclusive culture when it comes to our staff. Inclusion is one of our core values as an organization, and so making sure that, when people think about TeamMates, when they see that logo, we're here to serve all students, not some students. We do have at-risk students, but I believe that all students are at risk, especially the generation that we serve because of their connection to

technology, access to anything and everything on the internet, their disconnect with face-to-face interactions with people, particularly adults. I am very, very passionate about just making sure that we are providing young people with that face-to-face interaction.

DeMoine Adams:

We want to keep this program going for another 30-plus years. Sustainability is very important, keeping Tom and Nancy's legacy going. These are extremely important things that I feel very responsible for. I rarely introduce myself as CEO to be honest. I just say I work with TeamMates. I'm not a big title person. I'm more of a work person because big title comes with big responsibility. I'm very humbled. I never pictured myself being in this role, but I did see myself serving as a servant leader in some way, shape or form.

Lisa Bowen:

I think your humble leadership is what makes you so great at what you do, DeMoine. I do have another question for you. You had mentioned that you started being a mentor in college. Did you have a mentor of your own when you were a child that inspired you to do this at all, whether it be formal or informal?

DeMoine Adams:

Looking back, I had a lot of informal mentors, individuals from the community who helped me to see that there was another way to be successful. Pine Bluff, Arkansas, which is where I was born and raised, was a great community. There were a lot of people that were successful, but then there are also things that were in the community that were somewhat obstacles and challenges that kept people from reaching their full potential. We had some people that dropped out of high school. We had drugs, gangs, just things that I think were somewhat the norm to a lot of young people.

DeMoine Adams:

I'm very grateful that my grandparents, my mom and dad, they encouraged me to be a part of sports. That kept me out of a lot of trouble. I'm very grateful for our uncles and other community members that may have had those opportunities to be successful, but yet they helped me to understand that you don't have to do drugs. There's another way. You don't have to drop out of school. There's another way. They helped me to understand how to be successful and to make the best use out of my potential if I did X, Y and Z.

DeMoine Adams:

As they say, it takes a village to raise a child. Looking back, there were a lot of mentors from the community that helped me to be where I'm at today, because I believe that choices give you chances in life or they give you consequences. I'm very thankful that I had a lot of positive role models in my life that helped me to make positive choices that, as a result, has given me a positive chance, a chance to go to college and receive a quality education, a chance to be in this role today. I give a lot of credit to so many mentors. I can't just give you one, but I think that's where teamwork within a community makes the dream work.

Lisa Bowen:

I couldn't agree more. I'm sure you hear stories every day in the work that you do about relationships between mentors and mentees and how their lives have been changed because of TeamMates. Do you

have a favorite that you could share to help people understand the impact that a mentor has on a mentee?

DeMoine Adams:

Yes. Our data shows that 85% of our mentees have expressed being more hopeful after meeting with their mentor, which is extremely huge. That's a powerful stat especially these last two years with COVID when there's been so many people, especially our students, that have lost hope, their sense of emotional intelligence has been decreased. Anxiety and depression has increased. To have those numbers really shows the impact that mentors are having on the lives of young people. 91% of mentors report feeling more engaged, more happy when they go back to work, when they go home, and I think that's also to show that mentors are also getting something from mentoring a young person.

DeMoine Adams:

I would say those two data points I think really speak on the impact of a mentoring relationship between a young person and an adult. Our mentors are not trained to be tutors, to be therapists, to fix a kid, really to develop a relationship, a caring relationship where, students, they may play UNO! or checkers on a weekly basis, but yet over time, where mentors are staying with their mentees from elementary, middle school and high school, which is the goal for that mentoring relationship, to stay in intact. That's the commitment, and that relationship is what leads to trust, and that trust is what leads to helping our students reach their full potential.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. A lot of people, I'm glad you pointed it out that they're not expected to provide therapy, they're not tutoring the students, but what skills or qualities really do make someone a good mentor? If someone is thinking, "I don't think I'd be very good at that," what qualities do you look for?

DeMoine Adams:

I'm going to lean on our tagline that our marketing and recruitment manager, Hannah Miller, has put in place. Two words, be there. We're simply asking mentors to be there, to show up, to be committed, to be unconditional, to be that adult friend, to allow conversations, activities to be led by the student and to really see mentoring not as a one and done thing, but it takes time, and that 20 to 30 minutes of time that mentors provide that young person, it makes a difference, and we have inspired over 43,000 students over the last 31 years to reach their full potential through mentoring by graduating from high school.

DeMoine Adams:

All we ask mentors is to simply have a commitment to meet with their young person once a week at the school, during a school day, 20 to 30 minutes. It could be over their lunch hour or another period that allows that mentor and mentee to meet. Mentors have the flexibility to pick the grade level, to pick the school, whether it's closer to their job or closer to their house. We provide the training. We equip them with resources and ongoing resources. They are truly a part of a team, a team that wants them to be successful, as well as having resources in place for the students to be successful. Once a mentor joins this team, they are a part of a team and, no matter what school district, what community, we're here to serve. As a servant leader, you ripple the effect down to every single staff member, program coordinator, mentor, we are here to serve, so but two words, be there.

Lisa Bowen:

I love that. I love that. What message do you want to share with any listeners that may be considering becoming a mentor?

DeMoine Adams:

Of course, I know people want to be a part of something that's successful, so I would challenge them to go to our website, teammates.org. Follow us on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram and really see some of the stories. Everyone loves to see stories, pictures of young people smiling, spending time with their mentor. Check out TeamMates through social media and our website.

DeMoine Adams:

As they say, the numbers don't lie. We have lots of data to show and share, which you can also find on our website, in our annual report, and then on that website is where there's a link for you to become a mentor. There's also information on there that shares what a mentor is and what a mentor is not. We have real people that, if you have questions, you can contact anyone from our staff to actually talk with a real person. We want to be personable. We want to be relatable. We are still, at the end of the day, a nonprofit. I will say we're somewhat of a nonprofit, a small nonprofit. We're not as big as Big Brothers Big Sisters and other organizations, but I must say that we are the largest school-based mentoring program in the country, so first and foremost, get to know us and really see the impact that we're making because we do ask mentors to make a commitment.

DeMoine Adams:

We never want to give a young person a mentor that's not committed because data shows that, if someone comes into a young person's life for a short period of time, that can cause more damage than if they never even came into their life. We are looking for committed mentors. We need more mentors. We have students that have said, "I want a mentor." Their parents, their guardian have signed up the paperwork. They want a mentor, but we don't have enough mentors, and so there is a need, and we just hope that more will consider being a part of this team that has been winning over the last 31 years, a team that has a resume of being successful, a team that will be sustainable, a team that will never give up on a young person.

DeMoine Adams:

That is what we want people to know. When you join TeamMates, you join a successful team that has a resume of helping students win, and that will make you feel like you are contributing and impacting the world by inspiring students to reach their full potential through a mentor.

Lisa Bowen:

You're right. Everyone wants to be part of a winning team, that's for sure. What are some of the ways that students find TeamMates? Are they referred to the program? Do they reach out to you? Do you have parents that reach out to you? How does that connection happen?

DeMoine Adams:

Three ways that students can join TeamMates, one, they can self-nominate themselves. We typically do school assemblies, or we have coordinators at every single building, school district that can provide that

opportunity to students to join TeamMates by saying, "I want to be in TeamMates," and they take the paperwork home.

DeMoine Adams:

The second way is a parent or a guardian can refer a student to TeamMates. The student always has to say, "Yes, I want a mentor." Students are not required so that parent or their guardian can contact that school with TeamMates and get the information and turn it in. The third way that a teacher or a counselor can refer a student is say, "I think this student will benefit from a mentor." Same process, they get the paperwork, they take it home, that mentee has to say, "Yes, I want to be a part of TeamMates."

DeMoine Adams:

The most popular way is when students self-nominate themselves to say, "I heard about this program. My friend has a mentor. I want one of those people." That's what they say when they see their friend having lunch with a mentor, "I want one of those people." Those are the three ways. There's an application that really that student and their parent or guardian can complete. That gives us information about them, their interests, their activities, their background, and we try to match those things up based on the information that we ask mentors so there is some common ground, there is something that both the mentor and the mentee can walk into their relationship having something to relate to.

Lisa Bowen:

I do love the process that you guys take in making sure you're pairing up mentors with someone they may have something in common with. I'm sure that leads to more success for you. One other question I think a lot of people have when they start mentoring is what am I going to do with this child for 20, 30 minutes once a week? Do you guys provide support and give them ideas of maybe activities or things they can do with those kids to keep them engaged?

DeMoine Adams:

We do. Up front, when someone signs up to become a mentor, there's a two-hour training that we provide them, and we give them all of the resources, the tools, the information, including what to do with their mentee during those 20 to 30 minutes that they spend with a young person. A lot of our mentors and mentees, they may play a game, Game of Life, checkers. Every school building, we have games for mentors and mentees when they're sitting down. It's just a nice way for students to see this as they're building a relationship with a fun, positive, caring adult. Other resources, as the students get older into middle school, we provide conversation starters such as "what do you see yourself doing after high school," "what would you love to do in the future," ... getting students to think about what's next as Gallup likes to say. They call it next-ing. When you get a young person talking about the future, that gives them that sense of hope, that keeps them engaged and they look forward to middle school, seventh grade, eighth grade, high school and after high school.

DeMoine Adams:

There are a lot of resources. We also provide monthly what we call academies where mentors can continue to receive ideas from us, from our staff, but, overall, all meetings are led by the student. We train our mentors to ask the students, "What would you like to do today? What would you like to talk about?" If a student wants to go through this list of words as they're preparing for a spelling bee and that mentor feels comfortable, great, because we want mentors to get something out of their time as well,

but we have a lot of resources, a lot of games, things that are designed to fill in that 20 to 30 minutes, but ultimately, it's led by the student.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. Great. You talked a little bit about the pandemic and the impact that it had on kids and why more kids now than ever probably need TeamMates mentoring. I can imagine that having kids home from school and people avoiding in-person contact also impacted your number of mentors. Do you have a drop in the number of mentors, and is there a huge need for new mentors right now?

DeMoine Adams:

We did. I would say, pre-pandemic, we were on our way to serving a little bit over 12,000. That was our goal from our last strategic plan, but with the pandemic, our numbers did drop because mentors and mentees couldn't meet. Larger school districts, students weren't in school. Smaller school districts, they weren't allowing visitors in the school. Some students, they graduated, of course, so we always have a drop when we have students graduate, and this past year we had over 800 students that graduated. Our numbers naturally dropped because of students graduating, which is a great problem to have, but we also have had students lose interest in being a part of TeamMates because they weren't meeting with their mentor, and then we did have mentors who say, "Not at this time," or they may decided to take a pause because COVID was something that was real, and we wanted to respect and honor that.

DeMoine Adams:

Now that we're back, I feel like we have recovered, we were able to be resilient, we were able to provide virtual mentoring throughout the pandemic for school districts that allowed that mentor to still stay connected with that mentee through proper supervision through our central office. Now that we are recovering, students are still saying, "I need a mentor." We have community members that want to help more students to recover, to bounce back because, even though we're trying to get back to this new norm, a lot of students, they're still having a hard time with the new norm or even the old normal of coming to school every day, ready to learn, taking things seriously such as these tests, overall doing their homework. I would say our resiliency overall has helped us to be where we are at today. We did drop in numbers.

DeMoine Adams:

However, we have recovered because, more than ever, mentoring is extremely important and the impact that we show, but we're also not about the numbers either. With our new strat plan, it's more about the quality, not the quantity. If we never served 12,000 and were only serving 10,000, we want to make sure that those 10,000 matches are quality, sound matches where those mentors are committed and those students are excited, and then I think everything else will come.

DeMoine Adams:

Going to your one question, is there a need? Yes. There is a need because there are some mentees that don't have mentors because their mentor decided not to mentor because of COVID. There are some students that they need that additional caring adult in their life because of mental health, because of their wellbeing, because they would love to have someone else to talk to other than their parent or their teacher. There will always be a need. We have students that have said, "Yes, I want a mentor," but, unfortunately, we don't have enough individuals in the community that have stepped up to use their role to be role models. Our need is more mentors.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. Well, we're trying to get the word out for you today. Like any small business, I'm sure financing operations is always top of mind for you as CEO. What are some of the primary funding sources for TeamMates?

DeMoine Adams:

Just thinking of the liability of our matches, safety is a core value, commitment to youth, integrity and trust, inclusion and strengths based, those are our five core values. I would say safety is probably one of the most important ones because what makes us successful and unique is that we're school based. However, the liability, we must cover every match, and that's about \$450 on an average per match. Background checks for mentors, whoever wants to become a mentor, we don't ask them to pay anything, but we cover those costs. That's about around \$35 on an average, and then just other costs, programming, making sure that every school have a variety of board games, activities, things like that.

DeMoine Adams:

We like to honor our mentors and mentees, maybe a back-to-school kickoff, we love to celebrate our seniors when they graduate, but those I would say are the main costs that I don't think people think about especially when it comes to liability costs. Because we are school based, our liability costs are a lot lower than other organizations that meet outside of school. I would say, on an average, those costs are between 1,500 to \$2,000. We are pretty consistent, and we want to be good stewards of the funds that we get from foundations, grants and purely donations, whether it is monthly, annually, through a pledge.

DeMoine Adams:

We are always looking for people's time. You can get involved through TeamMates with your time. You can get involved with TeamMates through maybe your company giving us an opportunity to come in and recruit your staff. If you are the CEO or president or the director and you will allow your employees that time to mentor once a week, that is a win, but then also, if neither of those options, if you have the resources to help us to be sustainable, those are I would say the big chunk of the cost because we never put on a lot of the costs on our chapters. Our communities, they can fundraise for their local programs, but, overall, for us to be a sustainable organization, to be the umbrella for all of these communities. Whether it's through a pledge, whether it's through our foundation and endowed, I guess, amount, even scholarships, TeamMates.org is really the place where you can go to learn more about supporting TeamMates Mentoring.

DeMoine Adams:

If co-founder Tom Osborne were sitting right behind me, he would say the biggest need is the time of a mentor, but, as a CEO, time, that is definitely important because our mentors put the team in TeamMates, but we're always looking for someone to support us, to support the foundation, the sustainability of TeamMates so that we can serve. I think that is the reality, and safety, with the liability, with those background check costs, making sure that when school districts say yes to TeamMates, they trust us to bring in positive mentors, role models that have went through a screening and background check. We take on, we incur all of those calls, if not the majority of those, and so one support can help us to continue to provide mentoring.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. DeMoine, I know you've only been in your role for just over a year. What do you enjoy most about the job and maybe what's the most challenging part?

DeMoine Adams:

I would say getting out to our communities, getting out to our chapters. If someone follows me on Facebook, they will see that I may be in Kansas one day, I may be out in South Dakota the next day. I love connecting with all communities. I live here in Lincoln. Our central offices are in Lincoln and in Omaha, but I believe that, wherever we have a staff, that becomes our central office. Our regional coordinators do a great job. We have them living in the region of the communities that they serve, but I love getting out, connecting, thanking superintendents, our coordinators, thanking our mentors. That is the one thing that I love about my job is connecting with all of these constituents that we're serving and that we're asking to serve.

DeMoine Adams:

I would say one of the challenging things about this role is, going back to this entire organization, there are so many things that I must make sure continues because Tom and Nancy Osborne started their TeamMates 31 years ago and we want this thing to keep going for another 30 years. Just that responsibility in itself, I wouldn't call it a challenge, I would maybe say it's a responsibility. When much is given, much is required. There are things that I must be a good steward of in terms of how I make sure the culture of our staff feels, making sure that all of our staff are excited and that they're here to serve, not to profit.

DeMoine Adams:

I got to keep all of our program coordinators, 200 plus. Whether they're serving as a volunteer to provide leadership to their coordinators, sorry, to their local programs or they're getting some form of stipend, I got to keep them engaged. I got to keep our superintendents informed through the numbers, the impact, what we're doing, how students are being... I guess, graduating or receiving scholarships and, most importantly, I got to keep our stakeholders and investors excited about supporting TeamMates now and for many, many decades to come, so everything that we do as an organization I'm responsible for.

DeMoine Adams:

We have a great team, great regional coordinators. We have a solid, strong board that trusts me, and we have co-founders that believe in me, which puts me in a very fortunate position, but at the end of the day, the responsibility increases that responsibility for me to do a great job. Good and great, that's not good enough. Every day, I have to strive for excellence, which means that I'm working seven days a week, but as they say, when you find something you love to do, you will never work a day, another day, or however they say it.

Lisa Bowen:

It's one of my favorites.

DeMoine Adams:

Yes. It doesn't feel like work, so to speak. It's like a lifestyle. It's like I work out every day because I love it. It makes me feel good. TeamMates makes me feel good, but there is a responsibility of being a good steward. I want to do things right. I want to be responsible and I want to carry this legacy on for the next 30 years. I tell a lot of people I'm going to retire when I'm 71, so one down, one year down, I got 29 more

years to go. That's how much I love what I get to do, but the responsibility, that is something, that means a lot, and there are a lot of responsibilities for me to be responsible for, not just our staff, but at the end of the day, it's all about our young people, how do I keep people excited to serve and support our young people.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. Knowing you're going to be around for another 29 more years, what's next for the organization? Are there any big goals or changes you'd like to see come to fruition as you're reigning as CEO?

DeMoine Adams:

After COVID that has impacted so many of our local communities and local programs, we made a decision not to expand outside of our current five-state area. We want to provide quality support to who has said yes to TeamMates. If Grand Island, for example, if they have 150 matches, how can we make sure that we are supporting them so that they can be serving 200, 250?

DeMoine Adams:

There was a time when, TeamMates, we were striving to be in so many communities, so many more states, but quality engagement is one of our focuses. The second focus is impact and brand awareness. We want people, when they see the TeamMates logo, they know exactly who we are and what we do, and then we want them to have this sense of excitement that, "I want to be a part of their team. I want to support their team. How can I get involved? I've seen TeamMates. I've heard of it." We want TeamMates to be everywhere, and we want it to give people this feeling that, "Wow. TeamMates is doing great things for students. How can I get involved?"

DeMoine Adams:

Then our third focus is organizational sustainability. How can we sustain what we're doing and keep winning? It's like Husker football back in the '90s. How do we continue to win championships, help our students to be winners? How can we create that ripple effect of students reaching their full potential and becoming mentors, keeping our donors and investors excited about supporting TeamMates? How do we keep our staff excited about doing something that's meaningful knowing that, as a nonprofit, you may not get rich in this world, but the reward is seeing students reach their full potential.

DeMoine Adams:

Those are I would say our goals which goes back to our most recent strategic plan, and we're just getting started. When we do things right, the numbers will come, but we want get back to doing things right. We want to get back to showing love, making sure every local program that we're serving they feel connected to the overall organization. From Kimball, Nebraska, to Burwell to Axtell, all the way out to your Lee, Deadwood, South Dakota, we want to make sure that every local program feels connected. COVID has really impacted a lot of our programs, and we want to make sure that they know that we want to be there for them. That's my role as a servant leader, and that's the culture that we're creating through our central office is to be there for our local programs so they can continue to inspire the mentors, to inspire students to reach their full potential through mentoring.

Lisa Bowen:

There's a ripple effect.

DeMoine Adams:

Yes, and it starts at the top.

Lisa Bowen:

Yep. Absolutely. I'm inspired by motivational quotes, and I know you are, too, because I've seen your social media and you're one of the more inspirational guys I've met. Can you give us a few of your own words of wisdom to share with our listeners?

DeMoine Adams:

Well, of course, when it comes to TeamMates, I always like to say teamwork makes the dream work. It takes the school district, it takes the partnership with the community, it takes the partnership with those businesses and companies within those communities to all work together and, TeamMates, we've shown that we help communities work as a team to show those young people that they are the home team and we are here to help you to reach your full potential, so teamwork makes the dream work is one. I would say another quote that I would say is related to TeamMates in a sense of that resiliency is that winners never quit and quitters never win.

DeMoine Adams:

We want our students to know that you don't have to be first, you don't have to be the smartest, you don't have to be in the top half of your class rank. We just want you to finish, be committed, work hard, don't be afraid to ask questions because, at the end, whether you come in first or you come in 500th place, if you were running a marathon, life rewards those who finish. That's what we want to continue to strive and tell our young people. Another quote I would say, and I can keep going, but I'll just give you three just for the sake of time. Hope is the greatest indicator of one's success. Hope is the greatest indicator of one's success because hope does a number of things when it comes to wellbeing. I believe that wellbeing is what leads to well-doing. If you take care of your wellbeing, then the well-doing will take care of itself.

Lisa Bowen:

I knew you would have no problem with that question. I know you mentioned this earlier, but as we're getting ready to wrap up here, can you remind our listeners how they can get additional information about TeamMates and how they could get involved?

DeMoine Adams:

I'm going to do the reverse this time because I know there are so many adults that are connected through their social media just like kids. Find us on Facebook. Like us. Follow us. They say, older people, we're more in touch with Facebook, so follow us, like us so that you can continue to see the impact that TeamMates is doing in your place every day, every week. We're also on Twitter. We're on Instagram. We're even on TikTok, so connect with us via social media.

DeMoine Adams:

Also, if you're on your computer, even on your phone, go to our website. We have so many videos where you see the story, you see students being served so much that we put into our website because that's the hub, that's where you sign up to become a mentor. That's where you can actually give to TeamMates

through a donation, monthly donation, pledge through our foundation, et cetera, and then, if you want to visit with someone in person, our full team is on the website as well.

DeMoine Adams:

I'm not just this invisible CEO. I would love to shake hands and sit down, have coffee or lunch with you as well, so I am available as well. I feel like I'm not doing my job if I'm sitting at this desk. I am out and about, but start by getting connected with us so that you can see and feel and watch the impact that we're making on a daily basis, social media, website, and then TeamMates. We're everywhere. We cover the whole state of Nebraska, and we're just getting started in Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas and Wyoming. I'm pretty sure you can get more information for your young person simply by going to the school and getting an application.

Lisa Bowen:

I couldn't agree more. The more that you learn about TeamMates, the more people are going to want to get involved. I can guarantee you that. As we wrap up our time here today, DeMoine, what's the most important thing you want listeners to remember about TeamMates?

DeMoine Adams:

The most important thing that I want listeners to remember is that TeamMates started with an ideal, an ideal that really came from Nancy Osborne, a former educator watching this... I think, some commercial, some story where there was someone else that made a commitment to their community, they wanted to help their young people reach their full potential, and he promised that if these students would graduate, they would give them a scholarship. Nancy at the time knew that Tom, who was one of the best football coaches in the country, had that idea to coach and said, "What can we do? We can do something. How can we use our platform for good?" That ideal has now become a movement with a mission that is so powerful to where we are impacting hundreds of communities in five states all for one thing, for students.

DeMoine Adams:

We are here to serve students. We are here to help them to stay in school, to be committed, to be resilient. We're here to increase their emotional intelligence so that they can be leaders instead of followers, they can get back to being critical thinkers, problem solvers. When the going gets tough, they get tougher because of the resiliency that they see through their one-to-one, face-to-face interaction that they have with another positive, caring adult.

DeMoine Adams:

When we think of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, one cannot reach their full potential unless that student feels like they belong to something, that student feels like someone cares about them, and so we are providing their wellbeing, that level of hope, that engagement. That is what's going to help this generation become the next generation, and it starts with us adults. We must use our role to be role models so that our students know the model to follow. Otherwise, what they see is what they get. If they're not seeing us, they're going to get a lot of information from this thing right here, and this is not the way. The way is through a one-to-one relationship with a young person. Join a team that makes a difference one student at a time. That's how we will impact the world and the next generation of leaders.

Lisa Bowen:

Wow. DeMoine, thank you so much for taking time to share your story and the story of TeamMates with us today. I know you're a busy guy and we really, really appreciate it. Now, it's time to get you out of that seat because you mentioned you're not doing your job if you're in that seat, so we don't want to keep you there much longer. Thank you again. I really hope, wish the best for TeamMates and yourself as the leader, and I appreciate you taking time and wish you continued success.

DeMoine Adams:

Thank you very much. Like I say, we are just getting started, so get to know us, social media, teammates.org, TeamMates Mentoring. We're here to serve, not to be served. Help us. We are a winning team, and we will love for more to be a part of our team.

DeMoine Adams:

Thank you again, Lisa, for just the time for people to get to know me, but also, most importantly, to get to know TeamMates Mentoring.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. Well, thank you so much, DeMoine.

DeMoine Adams:

Thank you.

Announcer:

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