CARDINAL WATCH: STUDENT ESTABLISHES NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Q&A with Jessimae Peluso

Latin American studies continues involvement
The first thing you notice is his ear-to-ear grin and calming demeanor. But beneath that is a person with a gentle heart and great comedic timing. Danny Ye has never let anything get in the way of accomplishing his vision. For as long as he can remember, he has wanted to help people in need. While his vision has evolved over the years, his passion and commitment have never wavered.

Ye, who hails from Brooklyn, wanted to get as far away from the city as possible when it came to choosing a college.

He came to Plattsburgh State in 2009 as an undergraduate marketing and theater student.
Originally, he was hesitant to join the theater program. Ye recalled his interaction with his first theater professor.

“He told me, ‘Give me a good reason why I should let you in class,’” Ye said. “I told him ‘Well, Jackie Chan and Jet Li are getting old — someone’s going to have to replace them,’ after that he was like ‘Welcome to my class.’”

This epitomizes Danny Ye. He does things his own way. Director of the Educational Opportunity Program at PSUC Kyla Relaford can attest to that. Relaford first met Ye while he was a participant at EOP’s summer institute.

“The first thing that stuck out to me is that he was unique, creative and really bright,” Relaford said.

Relaford served as one of Ye’s advisers while he was an undergraduate student, and said he is an ambitious person.

“He has a sense of the way he wants to live his life,” Relaford said. “What (Danny) wants to achieve is not for himself — but to touch other people’s lives.”

Ye plans to touch the lives of others through the arts, specifically with his non-profit organization, SafeArts.

“I feel like the arts is something that really has no rules. With the arts you can do whatever you want,” Ye said. “For me, I chose break-dancing. It was appealing to me because I love moving and doing things that a lot of people can’t do.”

Ye said one of his goals is to inspire others to dedicate themselves to something.

“That’s better than just telling them ‘We know you’re in a crappy situation, we’re going (to) get you hooked up with a social worker, we’re going to tell you get your GED and then move on with your life,’” Ye said. “It’s important to show them they are somebody.”

Ye was a former beneficiary of a system called Covent House.
“I went through it myself. I wanted to prove to the people that gave up on me wrong.”

With that determination, Ye wants to bring something different for at-risk kids.

“The system now is so cold. It’s so straight-forward. They’re pushing numbers — I get it,” Ye said. “They (the kids) never had something to call their own. Through the arts, I believe they can take that negative energy and channel it into something positive.”

The motto for Ye’s non-profit is “the forgotten and unassisted teens of today are the welfare and unemployment seekers of tomorrow.”

Over the years, Ye has developed a close bond with the campus community and faculty.

“Being able to walk down Broad Street and feel like you’re the pope — I’m constantly waving at people. Everywhere I go, there’s someone I know.”

Aruna Gandhi, assistant director of Student Support Services at PSUC, has known Ye for three years during his time as an employee in the office.

“He is a very personable and hard-working person,” Gandhi said. Gandhi said that Ye was liked by the office and believes his traits will help him going forward.

“He has a lot of kindness, he is kind of an older soul — he wants good things for people and wants to do his part to help them in a meaningful way,” Relaford said. “Being that type of person will help him have a huge impact on other people’s lives.”

Ye was a first-generation college student. He didn’t follow traditions, and he wants to be able to stand in front of kids and tell them he was once in their shoes, sitting in that chair.

“But I decided to do something about it,” Ye said. “I want them to know that their founder was someone who went through it.”

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