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Cover Page Footnote
ALUMNI CORNER: The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program's very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni's stories.

This article is available in Speaker & Gavel: https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/speaker-gavel/vol56/iss1/7
Alumni Corner

Tyson Carter: What Forensics Did For Me
Ball State University
(1993-1998)

Tyson Carter

Tyson Carter is the Manager of Client Education & Communications at IMT, a software and professional services firm specializing in Identity Management solutions. In his 20 years working in technology training he has taught software courses to students from all around the globe. His areas of instruction ranged from MS Word to advanced probabilistic matching algorithms used in healthcare and law enforcement.

After graduation, Tyson moved to Chicago where he completed Improvisational Comedy studies at the Players’ Workshop of the Second City. Outside of work, Tyson volunteers with the Cary-Grove High School Speech Team, the American Blues Theater Company, and Cub Scout Pack 577 in the Blackhawk Area Council. Tyson would like to thank all of the teammates he had at Ball State and the lifelong friends he made from other teams. He would like to remind you that he has ENERGY and you have PACE.

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As a child, I was interested in just about everything from literature to art, from architecture to horticulture, and from horses to disco. During high school I was active in just about every club, played the tuba, and even got varsity letters in swimming. But when I started my freshman year at Ball State University in Muncie, IN, I put all of those activities in my past and focus on my future. That fall some of my friends from the residence hall were talking about going to check out the speech team during a weekend retreat. I was free and thought it sounded like something interesting. Little did I know that my interest in “everything” was an applicable set of skills – especially to forensics.

During that weekend retreat, we played a few ice-breaker games, we talked a bit about what the speech team entailed, and we watch a few of the older team members perform their persuasion, duo, and poetry pieces. I was enthralled. This was a new world to me. My high school did not have a forensics program and I sat there thinking, “This feels like home.” When it came time for breakouts. We were walked through the formula for a three-point speech and given an impromptu prompt. That moment is ingrained in my mind, the sun-dappled shade, the light breeze, and the faces of graduate student coaches, but I’m afraid not much else. Those seven minutes flew past in a whirlwind. At the end, they asked, “You said you have never done this before, right?”

I went on to compete for four years at Ball State and then stayed on for a fifth year as a graduate assistant coach while receiving my Master of Arts in Communication Studies. After graduation, Robert Heyart approached me and asked if I would be interested in working at his company in Chicago doing software training. That is where a 20-year career in technology education took off for me. In the fall of 1998, I joined National TechTeam in their Chicago office. This was a time when people still needed instructional education in how to use MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel (laughable by today’s standards). My speaking abilities and quick thinking were marketable skills in the world of corporate education.

My career has led me through small companies and large ones. From tiny software startups through behemoths like Arthur Andersen and IBM. Through it all, the ability to speak
dynamically, connect with learners on a variety of subjects, and entertain while informing can be directly attributed to my time on the speech team at Ball State.

My involvement in forensics has evolved over the years, and now forensics has become a family affair. I brought my fiancée, now wife, to help judge the NFA National Tournament in 2000 at Ohio University. She caught the forensics bug and has coached at various high schools in the Chicago suburbs ever since. I help out at her team’s summer speech camp and with extra coaching when I can. For the past two years, our oldest son has participated in the elementary school speech tournament. We are passing along the joy of public speaking to the next generation of our family.

Outside of work I am a Cub Scout leader for our local Cub Scout Pack and work with the District Training Committee, where I teach presentation skills, outdoor skills, and leadership skills to Scout leaders in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin - from the Chicago suburbs all the way west to the Mississippi. The skills I learned in forensics come in very handy, from being able to project when speaking to a large group without a microphone to leading youth in an activity with clear, concise instructions. I use the skills I learned during my time on the speech team every day.

I’ll be honest, I was never a great competitor. I think my best finish was 2nd or 3rd place at a handful of tournaments. But for me, Forensics was never about the competition - it was about the connections. I was most interested in meeting people from different backgrounds, with different interests, learning about innovation, feeling the full set of emotions, and forming lasting relationships with a community of amazing people.

I am who I am today because of Forensics. I would not have the career I have, I would not have the extra-curricular activities I have, and I would never have met my best friend if it was not for forensics. Forensics taught me the rules and how to break them – see, no three-point formula here. My interest in “just about everything” existed before I knew about forensics, but the serendipity of finding the speech team gave that interest a focus, and that focus has turned into a passion. I am so thankful that I was “free” that Saturday in the fall of 1993 and went to that speech team retreat. It was the best decision of my life.