

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Thomas Wilson:

I'm thankful for everyone who assists me in the classroom and I'm grateful. I'm very thankful to those individuals who helped me become who I am to this very day. It feels very good because it tells me they really care about me. They make sure I get the job done. We're a big happy family.

John Boccacino:

We're sitting here with Thomas Wilson who is an amazing success story for an InclusiveU student here at Syracuse University. He's involved as a student broadcaster. He was recently awarded with one of the Unsung Hero Awards during the MLK celebration, our annual celebration of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr here on campus. Thomas, you are such an inspiration to so many people. Thank you for making the time to join us here on the podcast.

Thomas Wilson:

You're very welcome.

John Boccacino:

Give our audience a little background on your yourself. Where are you from originally and what are you studying here at Syracuse?

Thomas Wilson:

It's a very interesting story. I've been all over the place and it's been very interesting. I'm studying BDJ in communication science.

John Boccacino:

That's broadcast and digital journalism in Newhouse.

Thomas Wilson:

Yes.

John Boccacino:

What made you want to come to Syracuse in the first place?

Thomas Wilson:

Me and mom were speaking one day and she was doing some research and she said that Syracuse University was a good fit. Here I am today.

John Boccacino:

Here you are indeed. You've really taken our campus by storm. For the listeners who might not be aware, Thomas, you are quite almost a celebrity on this campus. You were showing me during our pre interview there's some pretty cool clothing items that were made in your honor. Is that right?

Thomas Wilson:

Yes, that is actually correct.

John Boccacino:

Tell us a little bit about those items and how that makes you feel knowing that somebody designed these to honor you.

Thomas Wilson:

I feel very honored to receive my own tie and last week I received my own Thomas Wilson socks. It's very nice.

John Boccacino:

Of course, Thomas On The Town is the name of one of the shows that you happen to host and you're a reporter on. Before we get into that show, how did you get into news? You weren't watching cartoons when you were a kid, were you?

Thomas Wilson:

No, I was not.

John Boccacino:

What were you watching instead?

Thomas Wilson:

I was watching the news.

John Boccacino:

That's fascinating for a kid that young to want to watch the news. Why was that? What was it about the news that really appealed to you?

Thomas Wilson:

When you watch the news you're telling people in town what's going on in. They're counting on their news. You're responsible to tell the stories of the news and they're counting on that news. They're counting on the news to tell them the stories of the day. The people who are watching the news every day, they trust you to tell them the stories that you want to hear. Yes, it's something I always wanted to do.

John Boccacino:

Did you fall in love with the news pretty quickly when you were watching it? I know when I was a kid I'd watch my cartoons. I wouldn't really watch much about the nightly news or local network news, but that's not the case for you.

Thomas Wilson:

I watched just not the national news you see at 6:30. I also like the local news. I watch the local one and then the one that goes on at 6:30 for the national news. Sometimes it is interesting because you get to

hear about what's going on locally and then in the world news you get to know what's going on around the world.

John Boccacino:

That's great. I love your curiosity for the news. When did you start to think, "This is a job that I'd like to do for the rest of my life?"

Thomas Wilson:

Some people just inspired me and I said, "One of these days I want to be in this world as a broadcaster." Since I've always been in, I've just been in it.

John Boccacino:

It makes sense then why you'd want to come to Syracuse with Newhouse, the broadcast digital journalism program. When did you start to actually be a reporter, to be someone who was on television for our student outlets?

Thomas Wilson:

I started in 2019. I've been at CitrusTV since 2019 and I've been there ever since.

John Boccacino:

With your shows you have for Citrus TV, you do a segment called Unpeeled. You also do Thomas On The Town through an internship with the Orange Television Network. Let's start off with Thomas On The Town. How did you come up with this idea for the show?

Thomas Wilson:

It was me and the general manager who came up with the idea and it's who I am today.

John Boccacino:

Tell our audience about some of the assignments that you do like Thomas On The Town. Who are you talking to?

Thomas Wilson:

I am talking to the university community. We go along the campus interviewing different people and telling them about different parts of the campus they don't get to see. The point of Thomas On The Town is to go around the campus and show people part of the campus that they don't get to see on a regular basis. Thomas On The Town will bring them to different parts of the campus that they don't get to see.

John Boccacino:

Where are some of the favorite spots that you've gone as part of Thomas On The Town?

Thomas Wilson:

My first assignment was Starbucks and then I did an interview with the SU store here Marshall Street. Then, I did my interview with our DPS chief, Chief Stone.

John Boccacino:

I heard Chief Stone had a lot of good things to say about you and your questions.

Thomas Wilson:

It was something I will never forget and I really enjoyed interviewing him. It is just a joy to be a part of something.

John Boccacino:

When you're doing your segments how do you prepare?

Thomas Wilson:

Sometimes I ask the newsroom. I ask the newsroom a day before to send me the scripts a little early so I can practice what I'm about to say on the air. I always have someone. For example, when I preside over my webisodes on Friday, I always ask them to send my script Thursday night so I know. When it comes to Friday at 3:00 I know what I'm going to be talking about ahead of time so I can pronounce the words correctly. I just want to know so I have an idea of what I'm going to be talking about.

John Boccacino:

We're talking with Thomas Wilson who is a rising star journalist. He has great outlets for telling stories to our campus community. What are some future projects you want to do with the Thomas On The Town? Any guests that you're really hoping to be put in touch with?

Thomas Wilson:

I would like to go into the dorms and show everyone what our dorms are like. I would like to go to other places on our campus that some people don't get to see on a regular basis. I would like to show everyone what the behind the scenes of our campus is really like so people have ideas so they know how our campus is run. I would like to show everyone what our campus is really about.

John Boccacino:

When it comes to InclusiveU being here at Syracuse University it's such an incredible program that gives our students like you a chance to experience college life, to thrive, to pursue your interests. InclusiveU, how has that helped your life being an InclusiveU student here?

Thomas Wilson:

It's been very, very joyful, very grateful because it helped me become who I am to this very day. For example, it helped me get my mentors who help me in the classroom. I am thankful for them to help me and help me with my note taking. I'm thankful for everyone who assists me in the classroom and I'm grateful. I'm very thankful to those individuals who helped me become who I am to this very day.

John Boccacino:

It's really heartwarming to hear the gratitude in your voice because we've prided ourselves for a long time with InclusiveU and the Taishoff Center on giving students like you a chance to again experience

what it's like to be on a college campus. Did you ever have a day where you thought college might not be in your future?

Thomas Wilson:

No, I did not. I always wanted to do it and here I am.

John Boccacino:

You seem like someone that doesn't take no for an answer. You find a way to get done the things you need to get done.

Thomas Wilson:

No, I do not. If there's a way, I will try to get through. Yes, I'm looking for the right answer and I'm looking for the yes answer. I'm not trying to go backwards. I'm trying to go forward.

John Boccacino:

How have your peers inspired you as a broadcaster?

Thomas Wilson:

Some of my own peers in our organization look up to me and say they want to be like me. I get that question every day. Some individuals want to look up to me and they say they want to be like me.

John Boccacino:

How does that make you feel knowing that your peers, they look up to you? They respect and appreciate the job that you're doing. How does that make you feel?

Thomas Wilson:

I feel very good for myself because that tells me I'm doing my job right and that tells me they're very thankful for who I am.

John Boccacino:

You've definitely come a long way. You've been a very talented journalist here in our campus and I can't wait to see what the future is going to hold for you in this field of broadcast journalism. I want to switch gears a little bit to other activities here at Syracuse. You recently had this prestigious honor at the Martin Luther King Jr celebration being an Unsung Hero. You were honored before this great dinner for your involvement on campus. What was that honor like for you?

Thomas Wilson:

It was very, very, very special because I'm thankful for the university to honor me and give me this recognition. I wanted to thank her. Especially going up on the stage and shaking the hand of Chancellor Kent Syverud, that was a very special moment for me and something I will never ever forget.

John Boccacino:

I think one of the best parts about that too, Thomas, and you can hear the joy in your voice as you're talking about this honor, but people really do. It's not just your student peers. People look up to you as a role model, as someone who exemplifies everything that's good about Syracuse University. In your own words, how do you inspire people?

Thomas Wilson:

Going around our campus, taking time out of my day to go around the campus and check on everyone to see how they're doing, because I think it's very important to check on everyone once in a while to make sure they're doing okay.

John Boccacino:

Nothing wrong with having a friendly face that comes up to them too and wants to talk about Syracuse University. It must have been such an honor again, like you mentioned, to be at the MLK celebration and that was housed in such a great building on this campus, Hendricks Chapel. You're pretty involved in the chapel, aren't you?

Thomas Wilson:

Yes, I am.

John Boccacino:

Tell us a little bit about your involvement.

Thomas Wilson:

I'm involved with the SU Catholic Center here on campus. One of my responsibilities is to make sure the books are put up properly. I take care of the altar to take the books and put them back into their proper place.

John Boccacino:

What does your faith mean to you? Again, you are so involved with Hendricks Chapel. What does your faith mean to you?

Thomas Wilson:

My faith means a lot to me because I know I can always go and pray about it. If I was having a situation here on the campus, I will always go to our chapel in the Catholic Center. I'll sit in our private chapel and I will always take it in front of the chaplain and pray about it.

John Boccacino:

I know there's a lot of people, Thomas, between your faith and your community and your friends here on campus. A lot of people care about you. A lot of people want to see you succeed and I love your fighting spirit. You're going to get what you want to get done. You're going to tell the stories you want to tell and nothing is going to stop you from reaching your dreams. What are your dreams for once you graduate out of Syracuse? Where do you see yourself going?

Thomas Wilson:

I see myself going places. If ever there's a news station where the main anchor was not able to fill the responsibilities as a news anchor, I'll be happy to fill in.

John Boccacino:

I know you do a great job filling in whatever outlet shows to give you an opportunity there. I want to go back. Before we wrap up our conversation here, you mentioned earlier with InclusiveU and the Taishoff Center the community. Just how much did they open their arms to you and welcome you in?

Thomas Wilson:

I want to thank Beth. I want to thank Sam. I want to thank them for everything they have done for me. I want to thank Sam. I say he is my advisor. He's my advisor. I want to thank him for everything he has done for me. There's some things over Newhouse I was not able to take. He made sure I got into my journalism classes and he really fights for me to get into the class. I thank Sam for that.

John Boccacino:

How does that make you feel knowing that there's people whose passion is to help you accomplish your goals?

Thomas Wilson:

It feels very good because it tells me they really care about me and that tells me they really care to make sure I get the job done.

John Boccacino:

It's almost like they're a family to you, right?

Thomas Wilson:

Yes, you are correct. It's like we're a big happy family.

John Boccacino:

How about the friends? How has InclusiveU helped you with social development, finding friends, making those connections?

Thomas Wilson:

We have different clubs on campus like Orange After Dark. We have Orange After Dark. From time to time, I will go to the different events on campus. I have made some friends there and I still talk to some to this very day.

John Boccacino:

When people find out that you're going to be a graduate of Syracuse University what is that going to mean to you when you do graduate to be an alum of Syracuse?

Thomas Wilson:

I get very emotional. It's going to be the most proudest moment I ever accomplish here at the university because people told me I would never ever get this far, but guess what? I proved them wrong.

John Boccacino:

Yes, you definitely did.

Thomas Wilson:

Everyone who told me that, I think they're going to be in shock when they hear I have graduated from the university. I think they will be in shock. They're going to be in shock and they probably won't know what to say.

John Boccacino:

Did you have a lot of people that were telling you that this wasn't possible?

Thomas Wilson:

Yes, I have. Yes, I have.

John Boccacino:

That had to motivate you to want to prove them all wrong.

Thomas Wilson:

It was very awful. It was very hurtful, but I get to show them now when I walk across the stage and shake the hand of our dean. I'm going to tell them. Then, when I get my diploma from the university I'm going to take a picture and I'm going to say, "Look at the proof now."

John Boccacino:

It's a great lesson in never letting someone put a limit on what you can do. You can do anything you set your mind out to and clearly that value has been emphasized here at Syracuse, right?

Thomas Wilson:

Yes, it's actually the proudest moment I ever had. Like I said, I do a lot for the university. I work at the information desk. Sometimes we have to give information out to the journal people and we have to tell them information about the university. Sometimes, yes, you can ask anyone of my colleagues here at the university. They would testify that I am the most hardest working on our campus.

John Boccacino:

I don't doubt it, Thomas. I mean I hear your passion. I see your emotion. I just want to say on behalf of everyone who's listening to our podcast, on behalf of the 250,000 alumni including myself, you're going to join our ranks coming up later in this spring. We are proud and honored and privileged to call you a Syracuse University student and a soon to be alumnus. Enjoy every minute of your senior year. Go out there and do more great Thomas On The Town features. Live it up. You have earned it my friend. Thank you for making the time to join us.

Thomas Wilson:

Thank you. It was my pleasure to be here today for the podcast. Thank you very much.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations podcast. My name is John Boccacino signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations podcast.