

Waldorf Alumni Forum

Scott Williams

WALDORF SCHOOL OF GARDEN CITY, CLASS OF 1985



Scott Williams

I attended the Waldorf School of Garden City on Long Island, New York, from nursery school through twelfth grade. My mother, a public school teacher, and my father, a police officer, made tremendous sacrifices so that my sisters and I could attend the school. They saw that the Waldorf school provided something that couldn't be found anywhere else—

a classical, well-rounded, liberal education in a welcoming and diverse community where my sisters and I would be regarded and cared for as individuals. The school was a place where we would be able to reach our full potential, safe from the societal influences that negatively impact many young people, particularly those of color.

The small size of my Waldorf school was both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, despite my haphazard work ethic and less-than-perfect attitude, my teachers saw and nurtured what was positive and promising in my character. My two class teachers, Elizabeth Scherer and Donald Resnick, along with many other teachers at the school, completely dedicated themselves to the education of my classmates and me. Their commitment, love, and affection never wavered, even when I was not at my best. In partnership with my parents, my Waldorf teachers taught me life's most important lessons, even when I was not willing to learn.

On the other hand, I often felt frustrated. Although the Waldorf school had a strong athletic program, I wanted to play football and baseball on an elite level. I asked my parents many times if I could transfer to a large public school but they were steadfast and each time turned me down. At times, this made me angry both with the school and with my parents.

It took me a while to realize the wisdom of my parents' steadfastness. While I was at times an unwilling

Waldorf student, now no day passes without my feeling a deep gratitude for my Waldorf schooling.

After graduation I attended Trinity University, a highly selective college in San Antonio, Texas. There I fulfilled my dream of being part of an elite sports program and played on the varsity baseball and football teams. I also did well academically and was on the Dean's Honor List.

My Waldorf education helped me learn the importance of work that is meaningful and that positively impacts the world. Also, it helped provide me with the strength and courage to embrace challenges and to transform them into personal and professional opportunities. It provided me with the ideal that has guided my professional career and also the wherewithal to pursue that ideal.

After college, inspired also by my parents' work in public service and law enforcement, I joined the United States Secret Service as an officer in the foreign missions branch.

Five years later, I was offered a job as football coach at my college alma mater. I had had no training or experience for the job. However, the self-confidence and optimism that my Waldorf schooling had fostered in me enabled me to accept the position. A few years later, my father died, and I moved to a coaching position at St. John's University in New York City in order to be close to my mother and family. I found coaching immensely satisfying. It enabled me to positively impact the lives of young men by sharing the same core values of hard work, empathy, and compassion that I had received in my education and upbringing.

In time I realized that there were ways I could have an even broader, positive impact on the world. I became interested in philanthropy and the support of nonprofit educational and charitable organizations and began to work at St. John's in the area of fundraising and alumni relations. Several years later, I accepted the position of director of development at the Waldorf School of Garden City. With this, I had come full circle. I was able to make a contribution where I had once received so much.

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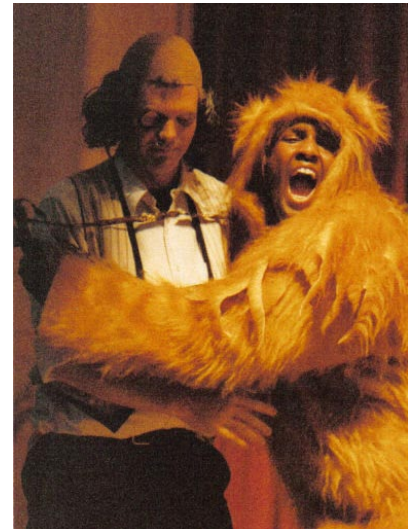
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I am now managing director of Changing Our World, Inc., a global philanthropic consulting firm. My work takes me all over the United States in support of Waldorf schools and other non-profit organizations and charities. I am also on the boards of trustees of the Waldorf School of Garden City, RSF Social Finance (formerly Rudolf Steiner Foundation), the Long Island Community Foundation, and ERASE Racism—a local advocacy group.



Scott Williams as the Cowardly Lion in his senior class production of *The Wizard of Oz*, 1985

I still find working with young people immensely satisfying and serve as a volunteer coach for a local high school football team. In all endeavors, I have not forgotten the lesson learned so many years ago as a camper at Camp Glen Brook (the Waldorf-based outdoor center in New Hampshire): “Leave the place a little bit better than you found it.” ☉

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