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This is Jenna Beninga and you're listening to the Pharmacy Leader's Podcast.

Welcome to the Pharmacy Leader's Podcast, we're broadcasting from Des Moines Area Community Colleges Ankeny Campus, in Ankeny, Iowa and I am your host Tony Guerra. Contact me on twitter at tony_pharmD or checkout YouTube videos on Tony PharmD. We've got now over 1,200 of them to help you with the top 200 or as you are starting to study for the Naplex. Today we have Jenna Beninga who is a P-4 at the University of Iowa. She is a past division one athlete and an independent pharmacy employee. So we're going to talk to her a little bit about that and she's interested in the continuity of care. Jenna welcome to the Pharmacy Leader's Podcast.

Thanks much for having me Tony.

The first question I usually ask is finding out about someone's leadership road, how they got to where they are and I'm always curious what it is that makes someone discover pharmacy. So tell us a little bit about your leadership road and a little bit about Greenwood Pharmacy and even pre-pharmacy, how that all started out.

Yeah so I grew up in a small town in North Eastern Iowa south of Waterloo, Hudson. And I knew really early on that I wanted to pursue pharmacy. I didn't know anyone in the profession, per se but I was really blessed with the opportunity to take two years of career's class when I was in Junior High and it was really focused on taking assessment test to, kind of just get you more in tuned to what your strengths were, what your interests were and line was up with potential jobs that you could be interested in and pharmacist was always number one for me so for no other reason than to just kind of say, this is what I'm going to do when I grow up I said pharmacy is for me and that's kind of how I based my classes in high school then just taking as much math and science as I could and you mentioned that I work at Greenwood. That didn't happen actually until I decided to go off to Iowa and start my pre-pharmacy classes but that's really what it solidified it for me. Seeing the work in action knowing that I was interested in it and I was enjoying my pre-pharmacy classes. So I did two years at the University of Iowa and then applied for pharmacy school. And I, it's been kind of a whirlwind and really unique in the sense that not many people who go off to college actually major in what they thought they would. Let alone have their junior high plan actually come to rotation.

Yeah and I remember being part of the pre-med track at the University of Maryland and I volunteered in a pharmacy to have health care experience for my med-school application but I kind of discovered pharmacy and it seems like that's the way it happens a lot for people is that it's something that they discover so. A little more unusual that you knew from early on but tell me a little bit about the mentorship you got at Greenwood Pharmacy and how that, kind of solidified things because it was really the work experience and being able to spend some time in the pharmacy that exposed me to it. It's a little bit tougher now with HIPPA and things like that for someone to shadow someone in a Pharmacy but tell me a little bit about how that being in a pharmacy kind of solidified your road?

Absolutely I think that independent pharmacies really have a reputation for being like a solid unit. That's really supportive of all their employees and I absolutely experienced that. I mean in the four five years that I've been working for Greenwood Pharmacy obviously my time there has changed a little bit. When I was a pre-pharmacy student I didn't know as much but my role has changed absolutely in my time there just that I would work in different parts of the pharmacy as I got more knowledge in school and everyone, pharmacist, technicians, everyone was absolutely encouraging and would help me along

in those times when I was still learning and learning how pharmacy works there I agree that was one of my first job so there was a big learning curve and getting used to their technology and processes in. It's just amazing how your co-workers can be supportive friends along the way in helping you to learn and grow and just to see where I am now is really special.

So tell me a little bit about how you actually only spent two years in pre-pharmacy. I spent three years because I was kind of figuring myself out and I'm first-generation college so I never really had that maybe tract of my parent did this or the other parent did that. So I took a lot of classes over again, organic-2 twice, calculus-1 three times, calculus-2 twice, biology-2 twice, physics twice. So there's a lot of kind of figuring college out and then on the other side, really getting into, you know, just being social in college and having other activities. So first, tell me a little bit about what you are able to do to make it so you only had to do two years of pre-pharmacy, did you have high school classes or what was it that really helped you keep it to three years.

I was actually really blessed with the opportunity in high school to take college courses even for a small to a high school such as I was at. But we had a community college in the town in Waterloo, Hawkeye Community College actually came to our school and taught different, more gen-ed based classes. But through two semesters of taking college classes through Hawkeye as a senior in high school I was able to go into the University of Iowa with, I don't somewhere between a semester and a semester half worth of college credit so absolutely I would not have been able to do my pre-pharmacy into use if that were the case. Kind of because I took a lighter course load my freshmen year but also just because of all those credits in the gen-ed classes that I had already met the criteria for going into college that I didn't have to take them at the University of Iowa. But I can definitely sympathize with you that you didn't necessarily know what you were doing your entire or at the beginning of your college career I was the oldest at my family and the first to go to the University of Iowa. I actually grew up in a family of Iowa State fan so I was kind of on my own and I was sitting not knowing where to go and necessarily who to talk to for advice other than my advisor so there was definitely a learning curve figuring out how college courses worked and yeah, it was a different sort of experience I guess.

Now, when I got to pharmacy school many of the students after their initial Appys would tend to get hired on at local pharmacies. You are already working in a pharmacy but then tell me a little bit about being a D-1 athlete because being an athlete is a job in itself. Then you've got your school work so tell me how you, kind of, navigated that to be that busy and how you managed to keep, you know, friends both at the pharmacy school but then also your track athletes as well because track I believe is a year round sport where, you know, maybe football in fall for spring practice or something like that. How do you keep things together with that much to do?

So I started track at the University of Iowa when I was a sophomore. It was kind of a dream of mine to be a D-1 athlete but unfortunately just with the rigorous class loads I, there were some things that I could not work around my freshmen year to make both practice times and class times work so I locked on as sophomore. And you are absolutely right it was kind of chaos from the very beginning of realizing that it is a year round sport and it's a huge commitment. I definitely enjoyed it but it did change my priorities a little bit just with the time that track demanded but also school demanded. So it was hard, it was hard to kind of navigate that tension but also realize to that I had friends at the university that I cared about and I wanted to spend time with so those three major things athletics, school and friends were, it was a difficult balance that first year specially but then my junior year. It was a little bit harder when pharmacy school got thrown into the mix when I was then a P-1 I was not actually able to get as involved in different pharmacy organizations like I wanted to so that's kind of other choice I came down to is, is track my priority or do I really want to dove in to pharmacy school, make friends and kind of make the most of the opportunities that I had at the University of Iowa with all the student organizations and pathways where you can kind of individualize your career, I guess. So my P-2 year when I was a junior I decided that spring to knock track off the to do list but it was a hard decision but in

the same sense it was a easy decision to choose to make more of my career then try to do too many things and not pulling myself into any of them entirely.

We rarely talk about faith because we really need to be secular because we don't want to offend anyone. But we had Christine [indecipherable 00:11:38] on Pharmacy Future Leaders last year and over the summer she went to some of the poorest neighborhoods in Philadelphia with physicians and nurses and they did outreach as part of their church, I don't want to say it was a church project because it was much more than that but they were unified in their faith rather than, you know, divided by their, are you a medical student, pharmacy student, a nursing student. Tell me a little bit about the church organization that you volunteered for and how that kind of helps keep you grounded making sure that, I guess the word is, I think sometimes we were so focused on career and make a sure we get a job and things like that but really at its core pharmacy is a service organization, it's a career in service. Tell me a little bit about that church organization that you were with.

Yeah so faith is something that my family has in sealed into me all my life so when I went off to college, going from a high school of 200 to 300 students to a college of tens of thousands of students. I knew that that was an obvious answer, something that I wanted to get involved in and also a way to make the university smaller for me because I needed those one on one connections, those smaller groups to get involved in and to start to make Iowa city feel like home. So the church organization that I originally was involved in, it was called The Crew and that was the first organization that I joined. It was something that was promoted in my dorm so I have absolutely met that my closest friends through that first church organization that I was in. I was actually involved in a couple different ones, I was involved in one for athletes when I was on the track team and then again in kind of more often to a different certain organization through the church that I decided was my home church when I was away from home. But that is when, I don't know, that was just one of those opportunities that came along to, I really feel like home and feel like I belong to which was really important to me. At first I was just kind of more of a spectator but then I developed more of a relationship role through all those organizations, becoming a small group leader and but being a part of discipleship's group sped also leading them with some of the roles that were younger than me. So it was a great opportunity to start to make my faith my own words. Before it had been kind of based on my family unit, now, I was off on my own and I was sitting and deciding on my priorities and this absolutely became the sole priority when I was in college.

Let's take a little bit of a turn and shift over to the way that pharmacy is maybe perceived and then how practice requires a certain set of skills. So to be in pharmacy these days, you have to be an excellent communicator both writing, when you're getting kind of the word out there about the certain things that the patient needs to know but also one on one with the patients. I want to kind of go through the way that you gained your communication skills. We'll start with writing and then we'll talk a little about teaching and being just an articulate communicator. When I went to ASHP when I talked to Emily Henningson she, I just said, ok, well let's just do a quick poster presentation and no problem, four minutes, very articulate, you got up in front of the classroom, you had no problem and actually, some of the students were a little disappointed to find out that you wouldn't be here next semester. So you're clearly excellent communicator but let's see kind of what that road is to become that way. So let's start with the writing. How do you become an excellent writer in this day and age when really texting emails tend to kind of shorten what it is to become a writer?

I think I was really fortunate again with being at a small high school to just have a really strong English department. I can name teachers through junior high up to the high school that were just great mentors and great teachers and just really patient with both me and all of the other students in teaching us what it means to be a good writer and I know through being all over the books and just that was one of my pass-times in high school. That was something I really loved was learning how to write well but I absolutely credit it to those teachers who, yeah they just poured their knowledge in to us. I know that the University of Iowa also has a really strong writing program but again because of those college classes I actually don't have to take any English classes at the University of Iowa. It was mainly through

junior high and high school where I learned a lot of those writing skills. But it wasn't necessarily just to the English department, I was involved in FFA throughout high school and I would absolutely credit that as being one of the sole reasons that I can do speaking events and write and edit papers. I learned so much through the FFA through doing different competitions that really strengthened my communication skills. I had some great mentors both my FFA advisor and his wife they were very patient and great teachers that really helped me along the way to become more independent in my speaking and writing skills.

Let's skip to teaching. We had a couple of teaching opportunities on this APPE or do you guys call the Appys.

Apes.

Apes? Ok, alright, so three different ways to call the same thing. So we got kind of two major opportunities here one is in front of a smaller classroom technician students and then you get to teach to a little bit of a bigger classroom in terms of the pharmacology classroom. So if you were talking to someone who is maybe a little more introverted what advice would you give them in terms of what you've learned here about talking one on one to students. So let's start with the pharm-tech class room where we really had a kind of a warm feeling although they said they really wanted you back next semester in and but tell me a little bit about what kind of advice you would give somebody the first time getting in front of a classroom?

I guess with the pharmacy-technician classes it was really nice because with the number of students it's easy to pick on people's names. Even from the first day you would kind of run in through all of them with me which was really helpful but knowing students by name really makes them feel part of the team and it helps to with then later on when you actually know them to call on them for answers and just know how to encourage them best but absolutely I would say the best way to get in front of students and make them trust you is inviting them in to the conversation. It's really hard to connect with students when you're just in front of them lecturing. It's more helpful for them to learn and it's more enjoyable I think too for you as an instructor to have that conversation across the room. And I would say that for the pharmacy technician classes that was absolutely easy to do once those first initial days were over with and we kind of got to see each other. Everyone was involved and I think towards the end everyone was coming up to answer questions and write their work on the board and that was really encouraging towards the end to see that change and realize that they've gotten used to me and I've gotten used to them and that hopefully we had some success towards the end of this semester.

So at the end of the semester also I had go to ASHP and you were able to cover my class and basically you were on your own. You were very autonomous and that if I give you something to do you just kind of go off and run in with it but then you also have a mid-west work ethic where if it's not done you're still going to do it. So this is, you're only obligated to be here five weeks of the six and you've been here six so I not only appreciate it but it just again lends to your work ethic. But tell me a little bit about preparing for an entire two hour class and what your process was and then what it was like giving a final exam review.

Well I do have to say first that maybe it wasn't my second week that I was here but I was looking at the calendar and I realized, huh, Tony's going to be gone and his classes they still need to be taught so I was thinking to myself, I'm not really teaching those by myself, am I? But that's how it worked out so.

I'd put it on the calendar so in my head I had told you but that obviously wasn't the case so. Definitely good that you articulated clarify with the preceptor anything that's like, this doesn't seem to jive or match up but we do get to talk every, almost every day for about an hour or half an hour but tell me a little bit about what that was like preparing for that, you had about a week to prepare for this big two hour lecture.

It was really great. I mean, the lecture that I taught was actually the review lecture prior to their final exam. So even though I wasn't necessarily here for the whole semester I was going through the book that their lectures were over and kind of doing a brief overview of every chapter just to get them prepared and make them feel confident for the final exam the next week and it was, it was really helpful for me too because as a P-4 student obviously I'm looking forward to doing that. The Naplex in the spring so it was, it was great to get that review too. So it's helpful for both of us, I guess my method in approaching the lecture was to give them the main points to kind of do the fly over of the semester touching on the points that I know Tony was making and the classes prior. But really my goal was to make them feel as prepared as they could be to have all that information that they needed to be successful on the final exam and then finish off this semester.

Now tell me a little bit about the Naplex. I guess I really don't understand what the process is from the school's point of view. I'm just really a fast test taker and standardized test have saved me over and over again. I took the Naplex and the person said, are you ready for your break? And I said, I'm done because I just am a very very fast test-taker but I wasn't necessarily very good with grades so I talked to the residency director of Maryland and I was like, oh, what's your, you know, minimum GPA and he said, it was 3.2 and I was like, so, I have a 3.0 coming out of, you know, pharmacy school. Does that mean I couldn't be a resident? He's like, we appreciate you but no. And so I understand that that much of the grades and this kind of big test are different. So what's your process now or what's your thought process in terms of incorporating one, time for it and then two, how are you going to prepare or what do you think you're going to do to prepare?

To be honest the Naplex wasn't really on my radar quite yet until prior to those restoration we had to go back to the University of Ohio a couple days of meetings and kind of residency stuff. But we did stress talking about the Naplex knowing what the test was like and what we should be doing to prepare for it. And I still didn't choose studying after that, not quite yet but this rotation was really great in the sense that it's not entirely clinical based. So for me to be here at D-mac all day and then go home and study it doesn't like mentally stress me out to be thinking about the pharmacy the entire day because I am not necessarily dealing with like, hypertensive patients, during the day seeing those kind of patients and then going home and then reading about them in my giant Naplex specs. So that was nice, I definitely did a lot of work here that kind of enhanced my Naplex studying with proofreading one of your, also your textbooks that you were responsible for editing and now I'm going through kind of pharmacy technician workbook. And those have obviously been great opportunities for me to just kind of touch my knowledge base and see what my strength and weaknesses are. And to continue to make tabs in my Naplex book of points that I need to make sure to look over a few more times to kind of engrain in my knowledge but it's been really good. Now I do have a plan going forward studying the Naplex how I'm getting through that text book and planning on getting everything done both in this rotation and the other ones that will be more clinical based.

So tell me a little bit about, I asked you to take this quiz and it's on gretchenruben.com's website and I'm an obligor, my wife is an obligor, you are an obligor. And what an obligor is, is that someone who puts others before themselves which in many ways is good but when you have a deadline coming up like the Naplex I feel like sometimes there's going to be some tension there and I think many pharmacy students and pharmacists are obligor because they do put other people in front of them. How are you, how do you handle that kind of pull to do the other things that you want to do for other people and then say that, you know, well, I also need this time to do this Naplex for myself?

It's kind of funny when you ask me to take that test. I think you already knew exactly what I was going to emphasize and imply to because you had already seen the way that I worked and do that, that whatever you told me to do was number one priority and I just did regardless. No, but that's something that's really good to think about. I think we kind of approach rotations as so I have my preceptor and my preceptor is going to tell me what to do and I'm going to do it and get good feedback and get references and all of that. But I think we need to realize too that it is much as it's, that's an opportunity

for the preceptor to core interest. Sometimes we also need to say, this is how I need you to help me too. And sometimes, well especially in the spring a lot of that maybe just me saying, you know, I really struggled to learn this section of my Naplex book. Can we have a way of focusing on patients like this so I'm seeing real life cases of people with this condition that it can make more sense to me and I think that's something that we hesitate to do because we're sometimes approaching rotations as this is my opportunity to impress my preceptor but also realizing that this is opportunity to individualize our experiences to us is very important, you know, at all. No not necessarily help us more in long run but help us in different ways.

So tell me just a little bit about how now you're going to take that you've been teaching in front of, you know, many people. How you could take this to one on one patient counseling because as a part of an independent pharmacy the one thing that's a guarantee especially with the independent that you work for is that they are going to know their patients on an individual basis. So what is it that now you can go back and as you're working maybe between Appys, right?

Apes.

Apes. Between Apes, what are you going to take back in terms of connecting with them but not only connecting with them but making sure that they remember what it is that you taught them?

Absolutely, I think that's my favorite part of working for Greenwood pharmacy as even though I am not always there often enough to know patients by name. Absolutely the other workers that work all year round do and that's really exciting for me to know that I'm working in that type of environment where it's like we're all family. We all know each other and that's really cool. I think my opportunity at my Ape in Decorah Hamlin Health Mart Pharmacy was absolutely in a role to just kind of seeing a different form of counseling in independent pharmacy role was just seeing how thorough they were in counseling and how friendly and genuine the pharmacist role is and making sure that they understand instructions and not necessarily just from a health care provider role but as a role as honestly like a friend as an approachable health care provider. I haven't necessarily gained that opportunity as much at Greenwood just because of my different roles in different areas of the pharmacy. But having that opportunity put up upon me at that Ape was really helpful both to see it in pharmacist at Greenwood and then to see it in a different independent pharmacy and just realizing our role in patient education is really key to independent pharmacy.

Well let me just ask you a quick three questions here. What is it that helps you keep your work on track, you're obviously driven, you were able to bounce multiple things. Are you a list person, are you a person that, what is it about your day that you can kind of keep it on track?

I think you know that I am a lose person. I am organized, I need to make sure I get things done in a day, everything that I want to get accomplished so I always kind of had a running to do list that I kept beside me. And that's absolutely how I keep my ding on track, that's how I keep focus and keep in tune with what are priorities for today, what are priorities by the end of the week and that just helps keep me organized, keep me driven to get my task done in a timely manner.

I can't believe tomorrow is the end of this, like it just started. Tell me a little bit about the best career advice you've ever received or given.

You know, I have thought about this a lot since you said that you were going to ask me this question and I'm not sure necessarily that it's advice I have been given per se in words. I think it's more just seeing my parents in action. My mom has had varying role since my brother and I have been growing up but she's now back to being a nurse again at the school where I grew up going to and my dad's a milk caterer and just their perspective and their respective jobs that they are doing something that they love. I don't remember them ever saying like, yes you should do pharmacy, no you shouldn't do pharmacy. This isn't the way that you should go. I think more the encouragement that they always gave

by their own example was just to pursue something that you love and pursue something that inspires you and I don't know, I guess just fulfills that role to help people. Obviously my mom was kind of a motivator in the health care sense again despite seeing her and seeing how much she loved doing that kind of role. But just seeing their attitudes that they don't complain about their jobs, that they maybe not every day as great but overall they love what they do and they love the way they get to serve people. It's just really inspiring and that's probably what guided me to end up in pharmacy and end up in something that I too enjoy.

The best advice or the most potent advice I ever got. I asked somebody how to become a parent or a good parent and they said, your children are always watching what you do. And I understood what they meant which is you're example is much more important than what it is you say to your children about what they should or shouldn't do. So to finish off what is it that inspires you?

Well I feel like I've talked about my family quite a bit but it's just because they've been so supportive in all the things that I've been involved in obviously I've talked about my college career, how I was involved in a lot of different organizations in the areas at the University of Iowa and I was definitely true growing up to. If my parents knew that I had an event going on that night they'd make sure that they would be at it. I can probably name one hand events that my parents weren't in attendance whether it was something for sports or FFA or anything really. They were always supportive of me being involved and enjoying extracurricular activities which was really great and I don't know, it always just inspired me to do my best to give my full effort and to kind of put my foot out there and try new things. Especially when I did move away from home but having my parents in my life and having really just a closed net family in general that's supportive of everything that I do has really been a blessing growing up and even now that I actually don't live close to my family. I live in Ankeny while the majority of my family is back in the Hudson area. I still very much feel that support and get that inspiration from them.

Well Jenna thanks so much for being in the Pharmacy Leader's Podcast. Thank you so much, it's been a really fun [indecipherable 00:37:33] gone by so fast.

No, again we appreciate all you've done for the students and January when they're looking around for you it's going to be a little painful for me but I'm glad that you got the experience that you did here and we'll continue to keep in touch so that we can make sure that your future is what you want it to be.

Well thank you so much.

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