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PYD Profile

Partners for Youth with Disabilities | 2013-2014

Ray Grandoit: An Entrepreneur's Success



Ray Grandoit, popularly known as Ray Grand, was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. Growing up, Ray always had dreams of playing in the NBA and being the CEO of his own company. However, at the young age of 14, Ray contracted spinal meningitis, which left him in a coma for several weeks and left him paralyzed from the waist down. Spinal meningitis completely changed his life, but not his dreams or aspirations. Ray eventually learned to look at being paralyzed as a blessing; he says, "I'm alive and able to do everything anyone else can, I just needed to learn how to do things in a different way, including playing basketball and running my own company."



After finding success through PYD's Young Entrepreneurs Project, at the age of 16, Ray was chosen by his high school teacher to participate in the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) class. He then used this experience as an opportunity to start a clothing line, Ray Grand Apparel. The company **Ray Grand Apparel** is a celebration of overcoming adversity expressed through design and clothing.

Ray has remained an active member in Partners for Youth with Disabilities, where he was matched with his long-standing mentor, Federal Judge Reginald Lindsay. An alumnus of PYD's Young Entrepreneurs Project, Making Healthy Connections, and Mentor Match Program, Ray has volunteered his time over the years as a spokesperson for PYD and a motivational speaker on overcoming obstacles to reach success. With his charismatic personality, he inspires others by sharing how his disability has provided him unique perspectives on life.



Recently, Ray was a guest speaker at Making Healthy Connections. He asked each person what they aspire to be. As the room filled with discussions of dreams, Ray shared with each of them some ways that he pursued his goals of continuing his basketball career and

starting his own business. He challenged everyone in the room to work as hard as they can and never give up. The group that day felt empowered to chase after their dreams, knowing that it is possible to become a dancer, a scientist, a photographer, or a doctor regardless of disability.



Ray graduated with a degree in Entrepreneurship from Oklahoma State University, where he earned a full scholarship to play wheelchair basketball. Ray has truly come full circle with his involvement in Partners for Youth with Disabilities with his new leadership role on the Board of Directors, once held by his mentor, Judge Lindsay. Through his participation on the board, Ray offers his unique perspective as someone who has benefited from PYD's programs first-hand. In addition, Ray's business expertise has been instrumental to PYD as many new replication projects continue to develop.

Ray continues to motivate and empower others in support of inclusion. His work ethic and determination combined with his creative thinking have helped launch him into the successful business owner he is today. Ray believes "We all are GRAND. If you work hard and never quit on your dreams, they will become a reality regardless of disability."

PYD empowers youth with disabilities to reach their full potential by providing transformative mentoring programs, youth development opportunities, and inclusion expertise.

For more information, please visit www.pyd.org.

