

## Contributor Series: Impactful Moments

God's plan for Joey DiNaso falls into place



Devastation set in after sophomore Joey DiNaso accidentally kicked a cheerleader in the face. Yet, this simple mistake prompted a memorable time where he felt God's nearness.

A 17-year-old who lost a bet — doesn't seem too uncommon. This is the situation DiNaso found himself in the fall of his junior year at Wheaton Academy.

As a result of losing said bet, he had to perform one lift with the school's cheer team at an upcoming football game. One lift. That was it. Could not be too bad, right?

Unfortunately, this one lift ended with a painful injury. In front of a crowd of football fans and spectators, DiNaso came down from the lift and his left foot made harsh contact with one of the surrounding cheerleader's eyes. Remorse and regret immediately consumed him.

"I just felt so awful," DiNaso said. "I didn't know what to do."

In the days that followed, DiNaso attempted to right his wrong. He was constantly making sure this cheerleader, Hailey Evans, the victim of his left foot, was OK. Although her black eye may have said otherwise, he looked for ways to brighten this girl's day. He was always checking up on her and looking for ways to be of help and encouragement.

One morning, while getting coffee, he decided to double his order and get a cup for Hailey as well.

"It was the least I could do," DiNaso said. "I knew the barista, so I had her write a personalized note . . . something like 'Sorry for kicking you in the face.'"

He delivered the coffee as just another simple gesture of how sorry he was.

It was not until about a year later, his senior year, that this story took a redemptive turn.

At one of the school's worship nights, during Spiritual Life Week, Evans pulled him aside to talk. She enlightened him that the day he brought her that customized cup of coffee, had actually been an extremely difficult day for her. That day was the day her brother, the one person she felt closest to and most loved by, had attempted to kill himself.

She explained that his simple act of kindness, in the form of a steaming cup of joe, meant so much to her. It was just a small reflection of the love of Jesus; something Evans desperately needed to feel on such a dark day.

It was an encouragement to her that sparked growth in her own spiritual walk. She delved into the Bible, and that night, with DiNaso by her side, she wrote a prayer to fully commit her life to Christ.

As he graciously listened to her honest confessions, he couldn't help but be mesmerized by the miraculous way that God had worked through this situation. It turns out that "one lift" was really a unique catalyst for an incredible testimony.

DiNaso reflects on this unexpected story in awe of God.

"It completely changed the way I think about loving others," DiNaso said. "He really even works in the small things."

This story is but one example of how DiNaso has seen God work through his interactions with others. It is evident that this experience, along with a collection of others, really has shaped the way he loves people. His gift of connecting with others has been used by God in a multitude of ways.

You may have seen him on the Rice Pilaf stage, or doing a backflip in the middle of Odle or walking around campus with a smile. In interacting with him, you will be quick to notice his authenticity and intentionality. However, if you are ever near him while he is attempting another lift, you might want to steer clear.

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