

Been There, Done It!: Dee and Bruce Urban



by Barbara Mann

New York Destination Imagination has a treasure that they have proudly shared with the world for decades—Dee and Bruce Urban.

Although this couple has been the driving force behind their successful Affiliate, you might not be aware of the large impact they made on DI around the world. Through their endless dedication, they have directly or indirectly had a hand in developing and supporting every DI Affiliate.

Personally, I have relied on Dee for leadership and advice. Any time there were issues that had to be tackled, Dee was always there to speak out and defend what was in the best interest of everyone, ultimately the kids. She was always on target when it came to the Spirit of DI. She never missed the “fine print” and was always there to question what needed to be questioned. Dee was the original “Ask DI”—the ultimate resource for thousands—a job she truly loved. Her advice and assistance saved me and all Affiliates many times over.

Over the years, there were many obstacles Dee and Bruce had to overcome, but they always remained enthusiastic about the program they love.

Dee survived cancer, which she attributes to her positive outlook and her drive to be there for “her kids.” Who else could have gone directly from chemo to a DI tournament?

When Chuck Cadle asked me to write an article about these two deserving friends, Co-ADs, and colleagues, I could only imagine writing a script for a new DI Challenge called “Been There, Done It.” Can I really share their history with an eight-minute time limit?

Appraisers say “Begin.” We travel back in time in a “Time Machine” more than 25 years – back to the 1980s. We would land in Orchard Park, N.Y., a small community outside Buffalo with a high priority in education. Dee, an art and history major and former classroom teacher, is now the young mother of two daughters, Lauren and Brooke. Bruce is a psychologist with a local practice.

As the scene opens, Dee, the president of the Orchard Park School Board, Bruce, and the school principal are attending their first creative problem-solving tournament. We can tell by their faces, they are very impressed with the educational value this could offer kids, and Dee is assigned to bring a regional tournament to Orchard Park. No small undertaking, but with a wave of a large magic wand, Dee and Bruce make it happen and Western New York holds its first tournament. They are instantly pulled into a bottomless creative problem-solving worm hole as dramatic music loudly plays.

We move through the ‘80s when Dee and Bruce become Team Managers.

Soon Bruce’s body begins to morph into a structure appraiser, trainer and Challenge Master (the audience “oohs” at the special effects).

Dee’s transformation is even more dramatic. Multiple hats keep flying onto her head; regional director, trainer, writer and webmaster. It seems there is no hat that Dee can’t wear fashionably and efficiently. As we peer through our time machine’s window in the 1990s, we catch a glimpse of Dee setting up a website and updating it weekly with helpful tips and resources. While working for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services of New York, Dee oversees the first volunteer challenge writing team and writes challenges, the Rules of the Road, and all necessary materials needed to make a pivot to a new program possible.

As the scene ends, she continues to write and develop training materials, practice challenges and more guidebooks. Her papers take flight and turn to gold as they reach across all borders, to all Affiliates to

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help kids and adults get more out of the program (this effect is definitely worth extra Team Choice element points).

As our presentation reaches the final scene, Dee and Bruce go for a huge finale.

Dee and Bruce become central figures in the international program. Both serve terms on the Destination ImagiNation Board of Trustees, become Co-Affiliate Directors, organize and run the first team-based TM&O Competition team, and develop and serve on the governing board of the DI Scholarship Committee— an organization founded solely to raise scholarship money for the team participants. Through their efforts, the committee presented more than \$10,000 in scholarships each year. They also worked with colleges to fund full four-year scholarships, which were donated directly to graduating DI’ers. (Bring on the Interesting Character – the large giant Penguin mascot dances onstage.)

As our time machine arrives back in the present, it is hard to imagine what we would do without these two amazing volunteers.

Luckily the wisdom of NYDI continues and embraces these well experienced team mates. They will continue to help volunteers and kids for years to come. Like all NY DI’ers and those around the world, we will love these two until the end of TIME! (Everyone bows!)

“On behalf of the Destination Imagination organization, I would like to personally thank Dee and Bruce for their personal contributions and sacrifices they have made to give, not only New York students, students around the world the opportunity to learn and experience the 4Cs: creativity, collaborative problem solving, critical thinking and communications.”

-Chuck Cadle
CEO, Destination ImagiNation, Inc.