

OpeningREMARKS

The Chemistry of Teamwork

Anyone who has played sports—organized, unorganized, or disorganized—knows the importance of teamwork. I think back to youth baseball and remember a right fielder who would settle in the grass and pick dandelions. Fortunately, not many hard-pulling left-handed batters stepped to the plate, so the right fielder could continue his lawn work in peace. Now, that is perhaps an extreme example of putting self-interest ahead of being a “team player,” but what can you expect from a bored eight-year-old?

One of the greatest challenges of teamwork is developing the right combination of personalities and talents to achieve the task at hand. It’s never an easy matter, but most championship teams transcend individual idiosyncrasies, creating a shared vision bolstered by synergy and driven by the desire to win. It was no surprise when New York Giants head coach Tom Coughlin ‘68, G’69 cited the Giants’ cohesiveness as a reason for their success in battling through the season and posting one of the biggest upsets in Super Bowl history (page 38). “What I’m so proud of,” Coughlin said in a post-game press conference, “is this group of young men who actually bonded so tightly together and became the true definition of team and exhibited that basically throughout the entire year.”

While teamwork is essential for success in team sports, it is also crucial to progress in many other aspects of our lives. One look at this issue of *Syracuse University Magazine* shows myriad examples of that. Working together, chemistry professor Rob Doyle and his student research teams have contributed important advances to the fights against diabetes and ovarian cancer (page 20). Earth sciences professor Christopher A. Scholz is part of a team of scientists that has endured years of logistical and scientific challenges working on the Lake Malawi Drilling Project in Africa to discover climate change there may have influenced human migration (page 6). Likewise, sculptors Mary Giehl G’92 and Kim Waale G’89 collaborated with people from the Ecuadorian island of Santay to create art pieces showcasing the island’s natural beauty (page 8). The list goes on.

At its best, teamwork provides opportunities for everyone, no matter their skill levels, to contribute toward a shared goal. Sometimes, it’s a smooth process; other times, individuals must overcome stubborn mindsets, understand others’ perspectives, and negotiate beyond their comfort zones. Teams with the “right chemistry” can accomplish both the mundane and the magnificent. All it takes is commitment to hard work and to teammates who appreciate each other’s contributions as much as their own.



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Syracuse University Magazine (USPS 009-049, ISSN 1065-884X) Volume 25, Number 1, is an official bulletin of Syracuse University and is published four times yearly: spring, summer, fall, and winter by Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244. It is distributed free of charge to alumni, friends, faculty, and staff. Periodical postage paid at Syracuse, NY, and additional mailing offices.

WEB SITE: sumagazine.syr.edu.

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