Meagan Roberts:

I thought that I wasn't good enough because I'm like, well, I'm coming from a public health background. A lot of my other peers had already had experience within the things related to STEM, so engineering, let me see mechanical engineering, anything within like the science. I felt like I was the person who had a music major there. Not-

Matthew Underwood:

Not in that realm. Right.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. No.

Speaker 3:

This is the ORISE FeatureCast. Join host Michael Holtz for conversations with ORISE experts on STEM workforce development, scientific and technical reviews, and the evaluation of radiation exposure and environmental contamination. You'll also hear from ORISE research program participants and their mentors as they talk about their experiences and how they are helping shape the future of science. Welcome to the ORISE FeatureCast.

Matthew Underwood:

Welcome to the ORISE FeatureCast name is Matthew Underwood. Normally, your normal host, Michael Holtz is not able to join us today, but I'm super honored and privileged to be able to host today's episode. I work with Michael in the communications and marketing department at the Oak Ridge Institute of Science and Education, and today we're super excited for this episode because, as we normally do, we are getting to talk to one of the former ORISE participants today. So today we have with us Meagan Roberts, who is a former participant in the National Nuclear Security Administration Minority Serving Institutions Internship Program, also known as NNSA-MSIIP. So Meagan, how are you today?

Meagan Roberts:

Hello. Hello. I'm doing well, Matthew. Thank you so much for that introduction. I'm doing well today. I'm fresh off the plane from Albuquerque, New Mexico, so in a way, I'm still trying to gather myself.

Matthew Underwood:

That's fair. It's a Friday though, and we've already worked through the technical difficulties, so we're doing good today, so we'll make it work.

Meagan Roberts:

That's something that they didn't have to listen to us go about, so, yeah.

Matthew Underwood:

That's right. Well, Meagan, like I said, welcome to the podcast. So first of all, just tell me who you are and how you got to be where you're today.

Meagan Roberts:

I'm glad that you asked that because in many of panels that I sit on or conversations that I have with people, they tell me or they ask me, so tell me about yourself. And that's just the hardest question because I feel that there's so much that I could tell people.

Matthew Underwood:

Absolutely.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. And it's just hard for me because I just get so excited. I'm like, I want to tell you all these things, but who I am, I'm from Antioch, Tennessee. When people ask me where am I from, I usually tell them Nashville, and they'll be like, oh, Broadway. And I'd be like, yeah, that's something that tourists enjoy. But I don't claim Nashville. I claim Antioch.

Matthew Underwood:

There you go.

Meagan Roberts:

I've been there for 23 years of my life, and then we recently moved up to Murfreesboro, but I'm from Antioch and I'm a daughter from a speech pathologist and a now retired police officer and a twin to my twin sister.

Matthew Underwood:

Awesome.

Meagan Roberts:

My background is very diverse as I've been mostly in the science and research realm, but my background started off with me getting my bachelor's of science and psychology with a minor in health and biology. And there was so much that I wanted to do when I first started my undergrad because at that time I told myself, I'm not going to change my major, but I ended up changing my major three times. It started off as nursing, and I wanted to become a nurse practitioner because I felt that it was important to try to show my community, as I am an African American woman, I wanted to be a woman to try to show others within my community like, hey, you could be a nurse practitioner too, or you could be within the health sector 'cause at that time, I grew up seeing a lot of white physicians, and so I wanted to be a part of that change and to tell people, hey, I'm in this position, you could be this too, to sort of encourage them.

And so I took a two week CNA course and I was in the dementia department, and I said, oh, this wasn't, I didn't think that it was going to be like this. And so I say that to say nursing didn't happen for me. And so I looked into becoming a physician assistant and my parents, they were telling me my sister, because me and my sister were going into undergrad at the same time, and they're just like, you guys have to make it out in four. So I was looking at the prerequisites and everything for a biology major 'cause I changed my major from, I went to Middle Tennessee State University, and when you want to be a nursing major, you have to take courses, your science courses before you could actually apply to the nursing school, take the HESI exam and things. So I never even took the HESI exam. I was just like, this is not for me. But I know that I wanted to do something within health. I was passionate in seeing health being brought up within my community and just advancing health for all.

And so I changed my major from, they had me a family and consumer studies, and then I changed it to biology, and then I just was like, well, biology, it was a lot of prerequisites that I needed to do to even declare a biology major, and it was a bit complicated. By then, I had taken almost all the courses required to apply for nursing school, but then again, my passion ran out and I said I could do something within the background. So I changed my major to psychology, excuse me, with a minor in health and biology, because by then, like I said, I had already taken most of those courses, and so I said, this will be easy. So then I could go ahead and declare psychology as my major, take those classes and be done, in which me and my sister were done in four years, thankfully.

But after that, I said, well, I still want to do something within health because in MTSU there was a program on campus or a club on campus called the Raider Health Corps, which we went to different classes and educated our peers on the most common college health issues, so mental health, alcohol, drugs, sex. So when I did that program, I was like, wow, this is really cool. And what it had known to be was public health. So I said, wow, okay, so I know for sure I could do something within public health. And so then that led me to get my graduate degree with my master's in public health with a certificate in health policy. I stayed in Nashville, so I got my graduate degree from Meharry Medical College in Nashville. So from that experience, it was my last going on to, Matthew, you got to remind me 'cause sometimes I go off the rabbit hole.

Matthew Underwood:

No. You're good. So how did you get to your appointment with ORISE as a Minority Serving Institution Program?

Meagan Roberts:

Okay. Yes. So after I got my, well, it was my last semester during my graduate degree program, and by that time I was looking at so many opportunities, so many things that were going on in my mind. I said, okay, I want to kind of experience something new. I feel like I've been in Nashville for all my life in which I have, and I wanted to experience something new to public health than that what I've learned in school, because public health, at the time of when I was learning it, in my graduate degree program, we were learning about human health interventions, creating programs to advance human health within the inner city of Nashville. And so I said, I want to do more than that because I knew I wanted to get my doctorate degree, but I just wasn't confident in myself to say okay or to know, okay, I think I could apply to doctoral programs right after I graduated.

So it was my last semester, I say all that, my last semester, and my cousin shared with me, she had got the flyer for the ORISE program, the Minority Institution, Minority Serving Institutions Internship Program, and she showed me the flyer and I ended up applying because I was really interested in its purpose and how broad the opportunity was for STEM and just health within the program. And so I applied. I interviewed, after I graduated, I interviewed with one of the, well, the way the program worked, they picked you based off your background and interest. And so I had the opportunity to choose whether I wanted to be in D.C. or within any other places that were available. So it's based off the national labs. We were able to go to either D.C., Las Vegas, and other states, and I was like, well, I want to try D.C. I put D.C. As my number one, Oak Ridge as my number two, and then I'm not sure, I chose some, I forgot what exactly the state was, but it was somewhere in Illinois.

So long story short, I get an interview with the Office of Nuclear Incident Policy Incorporation within the DOE headquarters. And from that, my mentor or the person that was going to be supervising me over my appointment, so I chose to do a summer appointment because the way that the ORISE appointment was set up was you'll spend your summer, so three months within whichever place that you chose, or if you were still a student, you would do a year long appointment. So I had just graduated. So of course my only option was the summer appointment. So I had an interview with her and Paloma, we still talk to this day, but she encouraged me to pick an appointment in person instead of doing it online because she said, it'll be a little bit hard to do the work and really get engaged if you were to stay at home. And so she led me to just say, all right, I'll do it.

Matthew Underwood:

That's awesome.

Meagan Roberts:

What she said was a good thing, but when I told my parents, I'll be going to Washington, they was like, what? They were not, they weren't really on board with that decision that I made. 'Cause they was like, well, you don't know the cost of living there. You don't, they were just so worried about me, but that's how I got to where I was, just my cousin sharing me that ORISE flyer and I really enjoyed my appointment.

Matthew Underwood:

So kind of talk about that experience a little bit of making that step to take that trip to Washington D.C. I'm sure it wasn't an easy decision for you, but kind of talk about that leap of faith. Was there any type of imposter syndrome when you first went? Or what was that experience like when you first got to Washington D.C. for your appointment?

Meagan Roberts:

Oh gosh. I had a lot of imposter syndrome. Just when my mentor told me that, what all I was going to do within, so with my background with public health, me choosing an organization that primarily focuses on nuclear security, I didn't know anything about that. And I had major imposter syndrome leading up to me moving to D.C. I felt like it was a lot of moments where my parents tried to talk me out of it, well, tried. Yeah. Making me doubt a lot of things, and you know how parents are, they care about you, but in a way they how should I say this, in a way, they, not that they want to push their fear onto you, but it was sort of like that.

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah. They're trying to look out for you, but at the same time you're like, I want to do this. You know?

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. So it was just a hard time trying to figure out, okay, should I do this or not do this? Should I stay here in Nashville or do this? And so I had a lot of moments where I was just questioning, okay, should I even do this? But the time came for me to move, and at that point it wasn't really no decision to say no, because I had already said yes to a lot of things. And so during that time, I was just trying to prepare myself, okay, I'll be going to D.C. I had to find where I was going to live because I didn't see any reason for me to go and start a new lease anywhere because it was just going to be too much trying to buy furniture and things. But that journey to getting started with my appointment, it was nice. You have to remind me what you said.

Matthew Underwood:

No. You're good. Yeah. No. I think that's great. We were talking about just that journey and to think about that big move, I'm sure was a hard challenge, but I'm glad it worked out.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. And it was one of those things with Washington, I had been there when I was way little, and so it wasn't anything that I just remembered my time. But since this was a whole new journey for me, physically, spiritually, mentally, so when I made that decision to move to D.C, I was ready to just experience something new, shed back this layer of myself. And so moving to D.C, it wasn't bad. I had already found pre-furnished housing. I communicated with the team that was a part of the ORISE appointment just to make sure of all of what I was going to do so then I could just be comfortable. So yeah, I would definitely felt that, not that I didn't deserve where I was supposed to be, but what am I doing this for? You know?

Matthew Underwood:

Right.

Meagan Roberts:

It was a very confusing time. It was, yeah, very confusing time.

Matthew Underwood:

Well, you know, once you got there, talk about some of the research that you were able to do during your appointment and some of the takeaways that you took away during your appointment and some of the research you got to work towards.

Meagan Roberts:

So some of the things that, I worked with my office, I was an intern, so a lot of the work that my office did was sort of on the classified side. And so there wasn't a lot that I could do, but there was a lot of things that I could support. It was like writing up some of the completion certificates, participating in meetings with different, let me see, I'm trying to get the names right, but with different personnel within the space that I was in. So I was supporting my mentor and just attending meetings and just listening to the conversation happening in the room.

And so my research wasn't really just scientifically based, but it was just supporting what my office was already doing with their mission and ensuring that our partners overseas and in other lab spaces, private public sector, that they knew how to handle our equipment, so our nuclear detection equipment as well as to just know within a radiological situation, hey, this is what you're supposed to do and this is how you're supposed to stay safe. And so I guess I would say that was my research, just learning about what they do and how important it is to stay safe. And what I learned within that time was how broad public health was. Because when I started the internship, I was looking for where is public health?

And I was seeing all these nuclear safety things, and I was like, I don't know where public health is until it was, yeah, I had imposter syndrome. And I thought that I made the wrong decision by accepting this appointment because I'm having to learn completely new things that I hadn't learned before. And that kind of brings my thoughts back to your last question about how I felt with the appointment. I thought that I wasn't good enough because I'm like, well, I'm coming from a public health background. A lot of my other peers had already had experience within the things related to STEM, so engineering, let me see mechanical engineering, anything within like the science. I felt like I was the person who had a music major there. Not-

Matthew Underwood:

Not in that realm. Right.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. No. But I learned that public health was active within my office because here we are. We're providing education to those that need to learn these things.

Matthew Underwood:

That's awesome. So you've mentioned a couple times about your mentor during your appointment. Talk about your mentor a little bit and the impact that they had on your journey during your appointment.

Meagan Roberts:

So my mentor was Paloma Richard, and our relationship has grown, even after I concluded my time, yeah, I concluded my time within her office. So when I first started out within my office, I had this expectation that my colleagues were going to reach out to me because, hey, I'm the new intern. Everyone [inaudible 00:17:56] to try to get to know me. And when that wasn't happening, I grew frustrated and was questioning my whole decision to move down there to D.C. And I had all these feelings and I didn't know how to tell Paloma. And so I already came in with a wall in front of me and anyone's just sort of talking. Have you seen that meme where the guy is talking to the brick wall?

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah. That's what it felt like?

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. I felt like, I mean, I said I had a brick wall, but I felt that no one really just knew who I was or who I am. And I had a hard time communicating this with my mentor because I didn't understand, because at the time when I came into the internship, my mentor was transitioning to become the office director. And so I'm thinking, that doesn't matter. You need to try to have some attention towards me. Give me attention because I'm your intern now, intern mentee. So I expected these things, and when I understood like, oh, wow, okay, let me try to scale back. Let me try to get to know her and try to understand what her responsibilities are now that she's the office director, and then let me try to figure out what schedule can both of us have time to understand, well, to understand what I'm going to be doing within the office and learn more about her.

And so I would say our mentee mentor relationship was sort of rocky in the beginning because I came in with expectations and like, oh, well, she's not taking the time out to meet with me. And the whole time she's trying to understand and get to know her role so then that she could better lead the office. And so we took more time to meet with one another, even if it was just for 10 minutes over the phone or 30 minutes on Teams. The more time that we took with communicating with one another, the more that I got to know her and understand her and everything that she had going on.

And so I was really thankful to just put down my barriers and open that up, open myself up to embrace this change of communication because I had known this communication within my career, within my academic or just regular career, because in the past, I've worked for the Tennessee Department of Health as a public health lab tech, and so that environment is very different. State government is very different than that of the federal government. So our relationship, our mentor mentee relationship has really, in that time, really grew, and I appreciative to use my words and have those uncomfortable, comfortable conversations to better learn one another.

Matthew Underwood:

So during your journey or your scientific career, have you had the opportunity to mentor other up and coming scientists at all?

Meagan Roberts:

Oh. I have. I wouldn't say that I've mentored any other scientists, but I've had a chance to mentor my peers, so my other cohort mates, and even now with the classes that have been a part of the MSIIP internship. I was invited to speak on a panel with, well, as a former intern for the MSIIP program this June. And just from me being on the panel speaking about my experience, I was able to connect with, I was able to connect with the class that was there listening to the panel, and they came up to me afterwards.

After the panel was over, they came up to me and we connected on LinkedIn, and I gave them my email because the class was going to many, well, many places, but there were some that were going to be in D.C. And so I took the moment to, hey, let me get your email. So then when you get to D.C, we can meet and talk. So yes, I've had a chance to just mentor others, and I think it's been a great experience because I'm able to learn about them, and I'm able to tell them, hey, this is my story.

Matthew Underwood:

That's awesome.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. Yeah. I tell them, I say, you got to give me a moment and you got to keep me on track, because sometimes I'll go off the deep end and you just need to bring me back.

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah. Well, I think it's super cool. You know, you talked about from the very beginning of this conversation, you talked about seeing all the white nurses and physicians and how you wanted to be a voice for the Black community in that aspect or in your career. So then for you to be able to then go have this experience, get to sit on the summit, and then show other students, hey, you can do this too, because I did it. I think that's a good full circle moment of you had this idea of doing it in this one realm, but then towards the end you got to do it in a different aspect. So you still accomplish that goal of showing people, hey, someone that's in my shoes can do this, just not necessarily in the way you first thought it was going to work out. But I think it's super cool that you were finally able to show people, hey, if you want to do this, you can do it. You know?

Meagan Roberts:

Right. You're right.

Matthew Underwood:

So I think that's super cool. So we talked about some of the challenges of your journey, whether it being being that voice in the African American community or just the challenge of moving to D.C. Were there any other obstacles along the way that you've had to overcome to get to where you are today?

Meagan Roberts:

I would say just challenging my character. It's a common thing for us to be comfortable in what we know and not strive to change, because change brings about doubt. It brings fear. And so when we challenge, okay, let me try to do something else different to get me out of my shell, it's like, no, let me go back. I'm not going to try to do that again. And I've had plenty of moments of that in my life. I tell people I'm an innate, I'm shy, but when I meet new people or if I'm in a room, they're just like, what? You're like an extrovert. I'm like, no, I'm an introvert, but I don't like to be in a space where we're in a room of five people and everyone's looking at each other. Someone has to break the ice.

Matthew Underwood:

Absolutely.

Meagan Roberts:

And so it's been so much that I've learned about myself, and I feel that ever since I came to D.C. and been in my ORISE appointment, I've had to change for the better because I couldn't stay, I couldn't stay comfortable. I had to challenge myself to connect with more people. I had to challenge myself to learn. Other than learning of school, I had to take interest in learning about all the nuclear and radiological dangers that are happening right now, not that there's anything happening right now, but just within my work. So I just really had to challenge myself and my character.

It's hard to just say, all right, I'm wanting to change this about myself today. And since changing myself, I've seen myself be more happier whenever I go into rooms with other professionals, because I'm not going into the room [inaudible 00:25:39] away. I'm going to the room with my chest up and I'm ready to meet new people. And I noticed that within the science realm, and I've always noticed it because my background is in science. I've worked in a lab. A lot, well, the majority of people that work in a lab or has a science-y background, they are an interesting group when it comes to communication. They're not the best, but when you get them talking about something like let's say, within their background, oh, you can't get them to stop talking.

Matthew Underwood:

[inaudible 00:26:19] what they're comfortable talking about. Right?

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. They're not, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So whenever I meet new people and I just be like, hey, how are you doing, I really bring them out. I really bring them out. And after our conversation, you know, I could tell that they're left smiling and like wow, this person actually talked with me today. And I'm just like, yeah, I don't want you to just not feel like you're not included within this space or in any space. So just the challenge of realizing the problems and issues that you have and making strides who change that.

Matthew Underwood:

That's awesome. I love that. So is there anything else about your appointment or anything else about your journey that we haven't talked about that you want to mention?

Meagan Roberts:

So within my appointment, other than all the things that I've sort of said with me being just like, oh, I don't know what I'm doing, I learned a lot. And my mentor gave me a lot of space and took time to invest in me, as well as my other colleagues. They invested in me to, hey, this is what I'm doing. I want you to be involved on this project. Let me include you. And that happened when I told them, hey, this is what I'm interested in. I was vulnerable. And I just told them, hey, I don't know anything about this. What is it that I could learn about this and how it connects with my background in public health? And they took that time to invest in me and to learning those things, so I was very grateful for them for that. And from being in my ORISE appointment, I was only in there for three months, but my mentor said, I still want you to continue with my office.

And so she told me to just do, apply for DOE Scholars, which is the same thing as the ORISE appointment, but instead you work remote instead of living wherever you were stationed at. And so I extended for another nine months in my office through DOE Scholars and my mentor and the manager of the program, Alexander Godinez, he and my mentor, Paloma, they encouraged me to apply for the NGFP program, which is the National, so the NNSA, the National Nuclear Security Administration Graduate Fellowship Program, which is aimed towards graduate students, but they're open to all, but mainly graduate students. So students who are currently pursuing their master's or PhD program or any type of doctorate program. They encouraged me to apply for that. And so I applied for that, and I got in and well, I was accepted, and I'm currently in that program now within another office, which the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Engagements, so I'm working with my new mentors slash supervisor, Sherry [inaudible 00:29:21] Bateman. And so I'm helping her with her research, or excuse me, her office duties and human subjects research and strategic partnership program.

So I'm working with her on that. So I would say that the ORISE appointment really prepared me, yes, it prepared me for the environment of the Department of Energy, especially here in D.C, at headquarters. It prepared me to interact with others and learn the office culture and how to thrive within the space. Because like I was saying before, it was a whole new world when I got into D.C. and just within the Department of Energy. And from that, initially, after I broke down my barriers and put away my pessimistic attitude of, oh, I'm not going to be able to learn anything, I actually learned a lot. And I was able to connect with a lot of the administration within the DOE. And it was to a point where, so it was, I believe, 13 of us within the D.C. headquarters office. Me and my other co-members, we would be walking down the hall back to our office from lunch and people would be walking down the hall. And I'd be like or the people would say, oh, hey Meagan, how are you doing?

And I'd be like, hey, and I'll kind of hold a conversation with them, and my other interns would be like, Meagan, how do you know that person? I'm like, oh, yeah, I met them the other day. And so they were just surprised at how I would interact with people. They would be like, wow, I'm surprised you were able to talk to that person. So it was one of those things, like once I broke down those barriers, I was able to talk with a lot of the other people that were there at the headquarters.

So that, and then now, it sort of fell into my lap this year, but I was recently, let me get it right [inaudible 00:31:25] I'm getting [inaudible 00:31:26] getting too excited. But just this year I started my Ph.D. in Health Law Management and Policy. And so what that entails, or what that program degree entails is for students with knowledge and skills needed to dwell deeper into the root causes of health outcomes among population groups within the United States. So I'm doing that degree program now, actually at my alma mater Meharry Medical College.

Matthew Underwood:

Okay.

Meagan Roberts:

So we are the first school to have a school of global health equity.

Matthew Underwood:

Oh. Awesome. That's awesome. Well, I'm so excited to hear about that work that you're doing now and kind of how your ORISE appointment led you to a new opportunity with the new nine-month appointment and then going on to work on the Ph.D. So I love that you're continuing to progress from your ORISE appointment, and we'll have to have you on again after you finish that to learn about all the other fun things that you're doing for sure.

Meagan Roberts:

Of course. Of course.

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah.

Meagan Roberts:

This is [inaudible 00:32:29]

Matthew Underwood:

We'll definitely have to have a follow-up episode for where are they now, right, to talk about all your new exciting research and development?

Meagan Roberts:

Yes. Keep me on the list, Matthew. Keep on the list. I mean, this is important. You know...

Matthew Underwood:

Absolutely.

Meagan Roberts:

[inaudible 00:32:42] this is how we learn from other people, and this is certainly how I learn from other people. It's just listening to how their life's journey has been, because it could be so much of what you're going through and thinking, I don't think I could get from this, but you sort of have to continue to live.

Matthew Underwood:

Right. Well, and I think that's an important message too, of people who may be looking at opportunities for either an ORISE appointment or other opportunities. It's you have to take that first step to get other places.

Meagan Roberts:

You're right. And even if you think that whichever ORISE appointment that you're looking at is not related to you, hey, don't, don't think that it's not related to you because most likely your office or the agency that you're working with, there's some similarity to what you're currently studying and what you can be a part of. So yeah, don't count yourself out because you're counting yourself out of an opportunity that could possibly be your future career, or you could be able to mentor others. So yeah.

Matthew Underwood:

Absolutely.

Meagan Roberts:

[inaudible 00:33:47] Yeah. I would say don't ever count yourself out. Open yourself, open yourself up, and open up your mind to experience different things because there is some good to come out of it.

Matthew Underwood:

I think that's a great parting message for our listeners. So Meagan, thank you so much for joining us today. Final question for you today, what brings you joy?

Meagan Roberts:

Matthew, thank you, thank you, thank you for just giving me this opportunity to speak about my experience, and I'm very passionate about this, about mentoring others and just having the conversation because you never know who you just helped, like, oh, wow. Okay. All right. I'm going to apply for this job tomorrow.

Matthew Underwood:

Right.

Meagan Roberts:

But just thank you. This is very important, but something that makes me happy, is that the question. Right?

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah. What brings you joy just in general life?

Meagan Roberts:

There are many things, but I don't have a concrete answer for you, Matthew. What brings me joy? Give me a moment.

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah. No. You're good.

Meagan Roberts:

What brings me joy.

Matthew Underwood:

We get all sorts of fun answers to this question.

Meagan Roberts:

Matthew, you know what? I'm going to spin the question on you. What brings you joy?

Matthew Underwood:

Okay. You know what I would say what brings me joy is family, of course, is one that we hear a lot. I have a little three year old little boy that every day just watching him do whatever he decides to do that day, whether it's build a fort in my living room and destroy my living room with blankets and pillows or whatever he decides to do is his little world of adventure that I always say it's his world, we're just living in it.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. [inaudible 00:35:24].

Matthew Underwood:

So I would say any of those scenarios of everyday life, You know, I as well as from east Tennessee.

Meagan Roberts:

Okay.

Matthew Underwood:

I'm from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Meagan Roberts:

Okay.

Matthew Underwood:

I know you're from Antioch, and I love just being outside just the fall weather and even winter, even though it's cold now and those first few days, it's a shock to the system. But eventually we do get to enjoy all the different seasons. And I'm a real outside, I grew up playing sports my whole life, so I love being outside.

Meagan Roberts:

Okay.

Matthew Underwood:

So anytime I get to be outside, that's another thing.

Meagan Roberts:

Okay.

Matthew Underwood:

So how about you?

Meagan Roberts:

You know what? And I was just in Knoxville two weeks ago.

Matthew Underwood:

Oh. Okay.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. So me and a colleague and my mentor, we had a program review up there and we toured the lab or Y-12 it was really interesting.

Matthew Underwood:

Okay.

Meagan Roberts:

Wow.

Matthew Underwood:

Yeah.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. It was a bit cold up there, but.

Matthew Underwood:

It is.

Meagan Roberts:

So let me see. What brings me joy? What brings me joy is that I've contributed to someone's level of advancement, so I've contributed to someone's better understanding of something within their life.

Matthew Underwood:

I love that. Yeah. I love that. You know, we talked about you doing that throughout your whole mentorship and then serving on the panel of helping the up and coming class. So knowing that you made an impact on them, and I think you've made that really well known that you are a caring individual who really wants to help others perform well and get to where they want to be. So I love that answer.

Meagan Roberts:

Yeah. Yeah. I love to see that because seeing someone within their position, I just love to hear how they came to be 'cause it's just I really enjoy that. I really, really enjoy hearing someone just like, wow, they're in this position. I thought that, because I equate it to my own life. As I was growing up, I thought I wanted to be well, I knew I wanted to be a teacher, and growing up it was just like, oh, well, I want to be this. I want to be that. I want to be this. I want to be that. I never had a concrete answer when someone asked me, what do you want to do in life? Or who do you want to be? I was just like, I don't know. Some days now I'm just like, I don't know. But I want to do something within education, teaching other people better ways of living or how to stay safe within disastrous situation. So I just enjoy that.

Matthew Underwood:

That's awesome. Well, Meagan, thank you again for joining us today and telling us a little bit about your ORISE appointment and what you're doing now, and we've really appreciate your time today.

Meagan Roberts:

Thank you so much, Matthew. I enjoyed my time. If you all want to please find me on LinkedIn, by name, Meagan Roberts with MPH at the end of it. So in four years you're going to see MPH, PhD, but...

Matthew Underwood:

Absolutely.

Meagan Roberts:

... [inaudible 00:38:13] Meagan Roberts, MPH.

Matthew Underwood:

Absolutely.

Meagan Roberts:

But thank you [inaudible 00:38:16].

Matthew Underwood:

And we're going to have you back to talk about that PhD experience. Right? We've already-

Meagan Roberts:

Okay. [inaudible 00:38:21] Yes. I'm happy to be back. I'll be happy to be back. So I just want to thank you, Matthew, the team at ORISE and you all for just inviting me to speak about my experience here. This has been the highlight of my day.

Matthew Underwood:

We're glad to hear it. Well, thank you so much.

Meagan Roberts:

Thank you.

Matthew Underwood:

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