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Interview with Abby and Will Smith

Rachel Keller

Abby Smith

Will Smith

Peter Smith

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Interviewer: Rachel Keller

Interviewees: Abby and Will Smith

Date: 6 February 2012

Location: Grove 4H Club meeting, Gund Ballroom at Kenyon College, Gambier, OH
(informal interview)

AS: Abby Smith

WS: Will Smith

PS: Peter Smith, Abby and Will's father

BP: Beth Pae, club advisor

RK: Rachel Keller

RK: So first I'll have you introduce yourselves.

AS: I'm Abby Smith and this is Will Smith.

RK: Hi guys, how long have you been in 4H?

AS: I've been in 4H for six years and I think Will has been in for four, almost five

RK: I'm going to get this [microphone] really close to you...OK so six years and Will, you've been in for almost five? Wow.

AS: Four or five

RK: So you guys must like it

AS: Yeah

RK: What do you like about it?

AS: [turns to Will who is in a wheelchair] what do you like? The people...and the fair...we oth show hogs.

RK: That's cool. With hogs, you have to take care of them every day, right?

AS: Yeah

RK: Like all year?

AS: Yeah

RK: So it's a lot of work

AS: Yeah...well we get 'em in the spring so just the end of spring till mid-summer, which isn't too bad.

RK: What's your motivation to keep working with them? Because it's a big time commitment

AS: Um...just looking forward to fair and going to fair, it's always fun.

RK: What do you like about the fair?

AS: What do you like Will? ...you can talk...[he mumbles]

RK: All of it?

AS: Everything? Yeah.

RK: Do you like the food? [WS shakes his head] No?

AS: What? [WS nods]

RK: Yeah? I was just thinking, they have so many different kinds of food that I bet there is something you would like...funnel cake? [he smiles] Oh yeah, funnel cakes

AS: The sales are always fun to watch.

RK: What do you think is important about 4H being at the fair?

AS: Um, just to show what everyone has done and what everyone likes taking part in...yeah

RK: You're pretty proud of the stuff that you can show?

AS: Yeah, definitely.

RK: And you have family friends come and see it? What do they say?

AS: I mean, most of our family does 4H. My mom's...um most of my cousins do 4H and so they enjoy coming and going to the fair and stuff.

RK: Well this is awesome, I'm glad that you like the fair so much. Is this your award?

AS: Yeah, this is...he got it in 2010 and I think he qualified for state

RK: Oh my gosh, Will that's great! For gun safety?

AS: I don't think he went but I think he qualified for it.

RK: Did you have to take a test? No? Did you have to show them how to use a gun?

AS: Yeah? Do you remember? And he takes hogs also.

RK: Do you guys usually take more than one?

BP: Tell her your good community story, from last year.

AS: Um. Well we were in an accident in July and we were in Nebraska so we weren't going to be back in time for the fair and um...sorry if I tear up...and um some of our club members Avery Bell ...showed our hogs while we were still in the hospital because ...he was in the hospital in a medical-induced coma for three weeks and just got out in December, after he was transported to Columbus. And our hogs sold for...mine went for around ten thousand dollars and his went for twelve thousand. And so, I donated all of my money to the hospital that we stayed in in Nebraska and um they decided to make a statue out of it, which you can see from in the garden that they are building, which you can see from his old room from the ICU and his money went towards a handicap van.

RK: And that's all from the community?

AS: Mhmm yeah

RK: From one hog? Wow, that's amazing.

AS: Yeah, it was really neat.

RK: So this is what the statue will be [looking at photograph]

AS: Yes, it's a statue of Jesus that they're putting in the garden.

RK: Wow, its beautiful. Look how big it is.

BP: It was amazing, at the sale, it was packed when their hogs came out. And every time someone raised the price everyone would just cheer and the energy in the building it was just...it was amazing...it really was...it made you just cry tears of joy...see

RK: It's a strong community. I've lived here for four years and I can—it's very obvious to me that how tight everyone is, how strong everyone is.

BP: Well when they...we asked for volunteers to show their hogs and I think every single person said 'I will do it, I volunteer'.

RK: Wow, well that's an amazing story. And I'm glad you're getting better too [to WS]

PS: He's doing good, he's doing well.

AS: I think he's going to show a hog next year, they're going to allow him to take one.

RK: You have lots of people there for you, that's what that means.

AS: Yeah. I don't think he [Colin] took a picture of this [photograph of statue] but if you guys want, you can have it.

RK: Are you sure? Cool thank you. And it would be OK if we talk about your story? [to PS] that would be alright?

PS: Yeah, there's a Caring Bridge site, Will Smith 12, and it uh kind of chronicles what's happened

RK: Caring Bridge?

PS: Caring Bridge, then Will Smith 12. It's a journal. What we've, as parents in this experience that we've had, of the accident, we've realized that we wouldn't have uh had the support had lived anywhere else. The rural community and the uh closeness of people—the school system, uh the church, Kenyon itself, and the volunteers who came out to take care of our house while we were around for five months and not around they kept the house clean, did the leaves, cut the lawn, um and then it was like an Amish barn raising, we had my two brother-in-laws and then with community members converted a back room of the house to uh handicap access and a complete new bathroom for Will, just the connections that you make in this area, the way people look out for each other, it wouldn't have happened—we've lived in Atlanta and Georgia but this is a great place. It's very special. It's helped him recover too. [to WS] That's right, isn't it?

RK: All of your friends are still here

PS: Yeah

RK: Well that's amazing, it is a very special place.

PS: Yeah, I love it. I'm the Athletic Director here, I don't know if you knew that.

RK: Right, no I definitely did know that, I definitely knew about your story, got the emails over the summer. Was definitely praying for you guys.

PS: Thank you, and uh its uh, each month gets a little better and a little better and we're all happy to be alive. It was a really close call but the uh...this...it's been wonderful. That's the way Kenyon is, that's the way the area...yeah made a big difference where we lived. Yeah...this is a fun project.

RK: Yeah, well I hope you guys can come to the exhibit that we have

PS: And its...

RK: We're planning the exhibit to be like a community event in itself.

PS: May something?

RK: Its that first Friday, we'll have food and music and it should be really fun so we'll definitely send an email to all of the faculty and there will be posters

PS: Definitely remind the 4H club, yeah

RK: Ok, yes thank you. Well thank you for bringing this photo—[to Colin] did you get a picture of this? This is just beautiful. What material is this made of? Is it stone?

PS: I think that's the clay model its going to be cast brass so they're going to put it in sand then yeah...she just wanted to..its like paying...the hospital's name is Good Samaritan—good people, they saved his life. Good people in Nebraska, now that's a rural community. They just enveloped us, they brought us meals, uh somebody gave us their car just handed us car keys uh found a place for us to live across the parking lot from the hospital. Basically this community that we've never been in took care of us.

RK: Where in Nebraska was it?

PS: Kearney, Nebraska and its between Omaha and...

RK: Oh, I'm from Kansas so I've been to Nebraska a few times.

PS: Its close to Platt River. We were on I-80, actually about 50 minutes by road west of Kearney when we had the accident. Uh there were level two traumas and um we were very lucky. We had a fast helicopter, uh great volunteer fire crew...it's like...

RK: Well I'm just so glad everyone is OK.

PS: Yeah, you're doing well aren't ya? [to WS]

RK: Yeah well you've got a great smile on your face.

PS: Yeah, well we're going to take him home.

RK: Well thank you so much for coming, thank you for bringing this [photo] My class is going to love to see it. Did the newspaper do something about your donation?

PS: Yeah, well they've done a few things on Will...it's been nice. It's tough to thank everybody.

RK: I think they know. Well, again, thank you so much for sharing your story with me.

