

## **The Main Points Podcast :**

### **The Power of Belonging**

**Host:** Cassy

**Guest:** President Chris Valdez *President, Richland Community College*

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### **Episode Overview:**

In this episode of *The Main Points Podcast*, host Cassy sits down with Chris Valdez, President of Richland Community College. Chris shares his personal journey, from a challenging childhood to his passion for education and service. The conversation explores resilience, grace, and the role of education in transforming lives. They also dive into how Richland is pioneering innovative approaches to education, making learning more accessible and trauma-informed. The episode concludes with Chris' vision for Decatur's future and the importance of community engagement in building a thriving city.

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### **Key Takeaways:**

#### **1. Personal Journey & Overcoming Adversity**

- Grew up in poverty, moving frequently due to financial struggles.
- Raised by his mother and later lived independently with his brother from the age of 13.
- Experiences of hardship shaped his empathy and commitment to serving others.

#### **2. The Power of Grace & Mentorship**

- Moments of grace from family and mentors played a crucial role in his development.
- A key story about his brother Cody offering support instead of punishment.
- A probation officer's intervention that shifted his trajectory.

#### **3. From Social Work to Education**

- Initially pursued social work with the intent to become a youth probation officer.
- Transitioned into education after internships in student support programs.
- Realized the power of relationships in learning and leadership.

#### 4. Richland Community College's Innovative Approach

- Trauma-informed education: Addressing students holistically, beyond academics.
- Emphasis on belonging, independence, mastery, and generosity in education.
- Replacing traditional advising with coaching to support students beyond coursework.
- Focusing on essential and technical skills to create meaningful career pathways.

#### 5. A Vision for Decatur's Future

- Decatur has the resources and potential to be a thriving city.
- Importance of fostering an inclusive and supportive community.
- Encouragement for bold action, forward-thinking leadership, and community collaboration.

#### Resources & References:

- [Richland Community College](#) – Learn more about the programs and initiatives discussed in the episode.
  - [ACEs Study \(Adverse Childhood Experiences\)](#) – Research on the impact of childhood trauma and its long-term effects.
  - [Trauma-Informed Education](#) – Resources on implementing trauma-informed practices in educational settings.
  - [Dr. Bruce Perry's Work on Trauma & Resilience](#) – Insights on big T and little T trauma and how they shape human development.
  - [Brené Brown's Research on Vulnerability & Compassion](#) – Studies on how compassion is shared among equals and the power of vulnerability.
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## Next Steps:

1. Get Involved in Your Community
    - Find ways to contribute to local education initiatives and support trauma-informed programs.
    - Engage with organizations that promote accessible education for all.
  2. Educate Yourself on Trauma-Informed Practices
    - Explore resources on trauma-informed education and how it can improve student success.
    - Understand how your own experiences shape your interactions and growth.
  3. Support Richland Community College & Similar Institutions
    - Attend events, workshops, or programs that focus on holistic education and personal development.
    - Advocate for accessible education policies in your community.
  4. Share the Episode & Start Conversations
    - Discuss this episode with friends, colleagues, or family members who might benefit from the insights shared.
    - Use social media to spread awareness and inspire action using #TheMainPointsPodcast.
  5. Stay Connected
    - Follow *The Main Points Podcast* for more discussions on leadership, education, and personal growth.
    - Engage with local educators, leaders, and policymakers to foster change.
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