

Leadership Profile of Jarrett Stein

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Photo Credit: Rebel Crew

Rebel Ventures: There's No Time to Waste

*It's time for us as people to start makin' some changes.
Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live,
and let's change the way we treat each other.*

*You see the old way wasn't working
so, it's on us to do what we gotta do, to survive.*

- Tupac Shakur

"It was time for change." These were the first few words that Jarrett Stein spoke when discussing the early beginnings of his idea for Rebel Ventures. Rebel Ventures is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit organization that is run by, for, and with high school students to promote youth empowerment through entrepreneurialism and healthy

deliciousness for students and families in Philadelphia. In partnership with the University of Pennsylvania, Rebel Ventures promotes youth empowerment through its efforts with high school students, college, and graduate students by engaging them in learning through joint entrepreneurial projects.

This concept of learning by doing was part of Jarrett's early work while obtaining his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Field of Food Systems, Childhood Development, Marketing, and Communication at the University of Pennsylvania from 2005 to 2009. During his time at Penn, he worked at the Urban Nutrition Initiative as the University Engagement Coordinator as well as a Middle School Coordinator. Jarrett was at Pepper Middle school in south west Philadelphia working with students in the after-school program when he asked a group of seventh graders "How would you create a healthier school?". Being that it was easier to find unhealthy foods and snacks for many of the students, the idea of creating a healthy alternative came naturally to Jarrett. What initially started as an idea in an after-school program grew into a business, powered by high school students, that sells thousands of snacks a year under the Rebel Ventures name.

Together with its youth, Rebel Ventures mission is:

We work to create healthy deliciousness with kids in schools and in communities. We impact the supply of

healthy food by developing food products that are sold to schools. We impact the demand for healthy food through experiential learning and working directly with kids in schools creating good food.

In addition to taking on a challenge that was not only daunting, Jarrett and the Rebels were changing the way, and redefining how, students and school looked at food and the association of food and youth empowerment.

Through this process came healthy deliciousness. Loosely defined, however intentionally designed, healthy deliciousness is both a thing (good food) and an experience (feeling happy, healthy, and powerful). For Rebel, eating good food that tastes good, makes you feel good. Simple.

While Jarrett continued his education and efforts at UPenn he was selected through a competitive application process to participate in Penn Social Impact House (PSIH) where he strengthened his social entrepreneurial skills by helping and learning about organizational purpose, community, and impact for social good. He was able to gather further lessons on leadership, gaining a sense of personal purpose, building communities, and growing the impact of social ventures and nonprofits.

With these experiences as well others, Jarrett co-founded Rebel Ventures in 2016 and is the co-executive director. Through their work Rebel Ventures

has created several products that are aligned with its mission of bringing healthy deliciousness to kids in schools. Some of the early products that were created were Rebel Bars, Rebel Seeds, Rebel Cakes, and Rebel Icy Colors. Currently, the Rebel Crumbles and the Rebel SnackGarden keep the organization pretty busy with more than one million Rebel Crumbles distributed to kids in over 300 schools since 2017. Snack gardens are given away to promote health portion control and sustainability; with the snack garden being a reusable surface on which to serve food.

When I asked Jarrett about the products they design and how they go about that process, he stated that “we stay in our lane, we are about food education, nutrition, and youth empowerment. If we made or sold products that did not speak to our mission of healthy deliciousness, we would not be doing our missions work.” The mission and the work. These are two things that stand out about Jarrett and his philosophy. His priorities have always been and remain youth empowerment through entrepreneurship and food education. His position as a co-director speaks to this point, in the fact that the other co-director is a former after school program youth participant. He not only is inclusive by having Rebel employees make decisions about the work they do but also employs the youth to make decisions about the direction that the work is going. When asked about that process, he responded, “Rebel is a very team driven

organization, and when working with high school students, there must be a certain level of trust and buy-in, by encouraging and asking students to take on more responsibility, they are taking on more ownership...of both the success and failures. This is a model that works for us."

Although, as great as that sounds, running a business and a nonprofit is not easy. Jarrett and Rebel recognize this and navigate several ongoing challenges throughout their process of stabilizing, maintaining, and scaling their venture. When asked how they navigate their challenges he spoke about how they make decisions and that their process is a pillar of their success. He stated, "we always strive to make value-based choices. With our values being youth power, listening, opportunity, loyalty, urgency, professional play, democracy, teamwork, radical, creativity, and sustainability."

By instilling a strong sense of ownership and accountability, as well as creating a system of strong values, Rebel Ventures is set up to be continually impactful. Not only in the nutrition education sphere but as well as the cultivation of the next generation of the workforce in Philadelphia.

When concluding my interview, I asked Jarrett what was next for Rebel and what were some goals he had in mind for the organization. "In the short term" he said that Rebel

will continue to maintain its current position and scale, but with the hope of "growth." In the long term he hopes to advocate for youth empowerment and entrepreneurship through nutrition education on a larger scale and bring Rebel-based initiatives to future communities to help improve healthy deliciousness for those in need.

Author bio

Joseph Brand is the University-Assisted Community Schools Site Director at William L. Sayre High School for the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Brand is an advocate and practitioner for youth empowerment and a proponent for social change through education with more than 10 years of experience in nonprofit education in Philadelphia. Joseph is currently pursuing his master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice.