



Freedom Grads ---> Future Stars

Lane Ward is a 2014 graduate of Freedom Area High School and participated on the Varsity wrestling, football, and cross-country teams. He was named Captain of the wrestling team. He was also a member of the National Honor Society and received distinction as top senior student in the subjects of Science and History.

Lane attended the University of Pittsburgh and graduated in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree double majoring in Neuroscience and History, as well as a minor in Chemistry. After taking two years off from school, he returned to Pitt and received his Master's degree in Teaching Secondary Social Studies this summer 2021.

After two uninspired jobs in molecular bio and neuroanatomical research labs, and an assortment of eclectic side jobs, Lane took up teaching preschool during college with an *AmeriCorps* civil service program called Jumpstart for Young Children. He served for two school years and a summer as a preschool teacher's aide. The program matched smiling college faces with under-resourced preschools in Pittsburgh, where they taught early literacy and emotion regulation, read stories, and had structured play times. Lane was recognized as Outstanding Returning Member his senior year in a corps of over 100 people. *AmeriCorps* is like the *Peace Corps* but located here in the United States. Through *AmeriCorps*, Lane completed dozens of service projects during college that ranged from digging irrigation for a community garden to removing old flooring in a library to assembling bicycles for foster kids.

During his sophomore and junior years, Lane co-hosted a science podcast for *The Pitt Pulse* magazine through a partnership with Pitt's WPTS-FM radio station. Throughout college, he periodically participated in a Mixed Martial Arts Club and in workers' rights organizing groups on campus.

After graduating from Pitt in 2018, Lane continued his civil service with *AmeriCorps*. He served a year full-time at a Community Health Center providing healthcare navigation assistance to 600 unique refugees and asylum seekers, plus their families, in Greater Pittsburgh. Lane coordinated with resettlement agencies to establish a primary care relationship with newly arrived migrants from all over the world, and he used language interpreters to help returning migrant patients schedule their specialist and diagnostic appointments around the city.

Throughout his service year, Lane completed a dozen more service projects with other organizations around Pittsburgh. These projects ranged from constructing a playground on a vacant lot to refurbishing a duckpin bowling alley for people with intellectual disabilities. He attended numerous training sessions and retreats, and he served as a member of the corps' committee that created training sessions.

After his year of service, Lane got a job in 2019 working under the federal government's Office of Refugee Resettlement. He helped care for unaccompanied migrant children from Central America while they stayed temporarily at a type of group foster home to get cleared to live with their family in the US and/or go through immigration court proceedings. He worked his last shift with the migrant children in December 2020, after starting his Master's degree and beginning to student teach at a middle school (in-person with masks) in September 2020.

In 2021, Lane focused more fully on student teaching 7th and 8th grade history classes under an experienced mentor teacher. He was additionally chosen in 2021 by the Pitt School of Education to mentor an undergraduate student while she created her own teaching portfolio.

Lane is now a teacher at a middle school in the City of Pittsburgh and looks forward to a dynamic career in education at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Asked what he liked most about his education at Freedom, "Of course I liked the teachers most and try to stay in touch with many of them. But in general, I liked the supportive sense of community that Freedom had among students, teachers, parents, coaches, and staff. I also found that the technology and project-based curriculum at Freedom put me at the cutting edge of 21st century learning. I learned so much from my Chemistry, English, Physics, History, DTV and Multimedia classes that prepared me for college and for life! The teachers really care to push the students at Freedom."