

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Welcome to La Louisiane, conversations brought to you by the official magazine of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. I'm managing editor Marie Elizabeth Oliver. We're here today in Cypress Lake Studios at KRVS with Caemon Scott, the founder of Mental Health Week here at the University, and Angeline Mathews, La Louisiane's student editor, who wrote an article about mental health resources on campus for our upcoming fall issue in La Louisiane.

Thank you both for joining us. It's great to have you here.

**Caemon Scott and Angeline Mathews**

Thank you.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

So, Caemon, I know you graduated in May. You were the official outstanding graduate for the whole University. So, congratulations!

**Caemon Scott**

Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

That's a big deal.

Can you share with us a little bit about what's on the horizon for you as you're post-graduation? I know you're going to still be part of the track and field team and training for that.

**Caemon Scott**

Yes. So, this year, I'm really just going to be running track. I'm still taking classes, specific to what I want to do once I'm done. You know, over here. But I'll kind of relax my mind a little bit. I haven't really relaxed since my freshman year, so kind of focus on track a little bit and really focus on NCAA SAAC.

So that's the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, trying to make as many changes and protecting student athletes as possible. So, it's really track, SAAC and, you know, relaxing my mind.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Do you have a leadership role in that organization?

**Caemon Scott**

Yes. So, I'm the representative for the Sunbelt Conference.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

OK

**Caemon Scott**

I represent every athlete in our conference. I was previously on the board of governors for the Student Athlete Experience Committee, but that committee did get disbanded.

So, I tried to find my way onto another committee to help create as much change as possible.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Wow. So really advocating for athletes and students.

**Caemon Scott**

Yeah.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

That's amazing. That's amazing. And then post, post this year, I know you have some big ambitions.

**Caemon Scott**

Yeah. So, after I finish my last year of eligibility on the track, I'll be attending Arizona State for the sports law and business management program, pursuing my way to becoming an A.D.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Wow, that's really exciting. Very exciting. Well, we're here to talk about mental health.

**Caemon Scott**

Correct.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

And as the founder of Mental Health Week, I was hoping you could share with us just kind of what inspired you. Was it a personal struggle that you have? Was it something that you saw among your peers? What really kind of got you started?

**Caemon Scott**

So, from a younger age, I've always been someone that likes to help people. I knew that was my gift. I actually changed my major my freshman year from chemistry to PR personally, just to help people. But in high school, I remember I was getting ready for recitation one day, and then a friend of mine had called me and they were basically saying, like, they didn't want to be here anymore.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Oh, I'm so sorry.

**Caemon Scott**

And I was the last person they talked to. And then I didn't hear from them for like a week.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Oh, gosh.

**Caemon Scott**

I remember I took it like it was my fault. But then, thank God, a week later, that person actually called me, reached out to me. My senior year of high school in the middle of recruiting. I had a close family friend who ended up committing suicide.

So that's kind of always been prevalent around me. Freshman year, I remember scrolling on social media. Someone from Southern had committed suicide. I saw everyone from Lafayette because I'm from Lafayette originally, so I saw everyone here kind of hurting in that way. And it came to the point where it was like, someone has to do something. Like, a lot of people say they want to be the change.

A lot of people say it's time to be the change. A lot of people say this is the generation of the change. Someone has to lead that change. Now, I'll never forget. I'm in Houston visiting Texas Southern, visiting a friend out there, and they're like, yeah, we have a day off Wednesday for mental health day. I said what? That's one of the dumbest ideas I've ever heard in my life.

I come back to class in my statistics class. And some of my classmates are talking about skipping class for mental health, like mental health reasons. I'm like, that is one of the best ideas ever in my life. So really began doing research and things like that from those avenues. But I got it from Texas Southern. A friend of mine told me first I was very reluctant, but I saw the positives come out of it.

### **Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yeah, and just having those personal experiences, I'm sure just seeing that need firsthand. Wow, that's so powerful. Thank you for sharing. And Angeline, I remember you coming to me whenever we were talking about story ideas and you were so passionate about the idea to talk about mental health and mental health resources and like, bringing that to the forefront, because what we do with our magazine, it's really for the whole University community.

But your role is advocating for students and telling those student stories. So, can you share a little bit about why you thought it was so important to share this story now?

### **Angeline Mathews**

Yes, I think like the short-term answer is like, I'm a student at UL. I'm like on my, you know, Outlook, looking through my emails and I get the like, OK, UL is rolling through with a new, mental health program called Uwill.

And like, as someone who has used UL's in-person therapy and struggled with finding a time where the counselor's available and I'm available and it's like all in person and it gets, you know, it gets messy. It gets complicated. So, when I saw like a 24, like 24/7 therapy access all online, you can do it like that is like the epitome of the college experience is like having to find time for your mental health, like while you're dealing with so many other things.

So, I saw that. And like as someone who struggled with their mental health and like a journalism student, I was like, I need to report on this. Like it's like easy to get an email like, OK, new therapy services. But like some people ignore their emails, you know, not everyone's checking. So, I wanted to be, you know, I want a story in the magazine to last, and I want people to read it and be like, these are the resources.

Like, I don't, no confusion. No. Like, is UL there for me? Like, I want students to know, like, yes, this this school cares about you. I think the long-term answer is like, since COVID, like I was like a sophomore, we all were like home, isolated. It was scary. And when I talked to, Dr. Frederick, who's the director of Counseling and Testing, you know, on campus at the Saucier Wellness Center, he said, like Fall 24 was the first time, like people who were freshman in high school and people who were freshman in college were like, on the college campus together.

Like people who struggled the most in 2020 with, like, being new to, like, high school and college. Now we're both here and like. What does that look like? How do we navigate? So, it was like. It's been. He had been talking about, you know, improving UL's mental health services since 2020. So, like hearing him say that and like the Uwill rolling really it was just like this was the perfect time to like tell the story.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yes. Wow, wow. That's amazing. And I'm sure that, you know, having been able to report on it, like you were able to see all the things that, you know, you experienced, but then to talk to other people, I'm sure that was affirming as well.

**Angeline Mathews**

Yeah. When Dr. Frederick definitely, like, hammered the like, nail on the head like COVID. We needed to do something. It's been a long time coming. Like I need it to happen.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yeah. You guys went through some stuff.

**Angeline Mathews**

Yes, yes. And like this. This is to you. My question to you, What? Like I've heard you say, like I went to Texas Southern, and I saw all these mental health initiatives. Like, what did that look like to you?

Like, I mean, I know they had, like, the day off, but, like, what did you see there? And like, can you share, like, how was that inspired? Like, you know, the work that you brought back to UL.

**Caemon Scott**

It's weird because I didn't actually see it. I just heard about it. But, you know, when someone plants a seed into the ground, you got to water it. I felt like my research was watering that seed that was planted into the ground. Looking at schools like Eastern Illinois University, looking at a lot of schools in the Eastern Hemisphere that already have established mental health weeks, multiple days actually. Looking at their blueprint, calling them, asking student athletes number one, you know, at the end of the day I'm a student athlete.

Asking student athletes how does this affect you? Trying to get in contact with regular students, asking them, how did this affect you? Getting in contact with some administration and being like, how does this work at your campus? So really doing a lot of research for a lot of different schools because I didn't really see it at Texas Southern, but I knew it was something that was happening all across the country.

And, and we're in the South. So, like, mental health is not really talked about as much. You know, there's a little stigma whenever it comes to that. So, trying to be one of the first in the South to really do something as big as that.

**Angeline Mathews**

Yeah. And how did you like turn that idea? Like, I am one person. I want to make this a campus-wide initiative. How did that start with you, to you know. Now it's. It's you know, mental health week. It happens every year. How did that happen?

**Caemon Scott**

I met some good people along the way. Jackson Tidwell. You know, he's not here anymore. And Mr. Telvin from UPC. It's funny that we kind of started talking a little before I got this idea, and I remember I got the idea on the first two people I went because that's the only people I really knew at that point in time. Before I even started advocating things like that and like, I was only track. I didn't go on campus like it was track, track, track, go home, school. Track, track, track again. So, meeting them along the way and bringing that idea to them. Now, when they didn't know anything, they pointed me in the right direction.

Also, I had to give a big shout out to my advisor Dr. A, she helped me a lot along the way as well.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

And for those who don't know, doctor...

**Caemon Scott**

Dr. Auverset is my counselor. I mean, my advisors for PR that's what I graduated in.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yes, so shout out to her.

**Caemon Scott**

But they always pointed me in the right direction and put me with what I need to be equipped with as we, you know, further looked into the details and things like that. They pointed me out to some people I should hit along the way, because I know I've said many times. I looked at my advocacy as a big pyramid. If students can say yes, faculty can say yes, now deans are saying yes, vice presidents and things like that are saying yes. How could the president say no? If everything else is green, how can the top be red?

So that's kind of like the funnel I envisioned. And so, I, you know, hit all those different aspects and different ways to make sure that President Savoie eventually couldn't say no.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Wow. Well, if you're just joining us, I'm Marie Elizabeth Oliver, managing editor for Louisiane magazine. I'm here with Caemon Scott, the founder of Mental Health Week, and Angeline Mathews, the student editor at La Louisiane.

So, tell us, like, you just kind of described your process of making this, this huge change. This thing that is going to happen every year now at the University. What kinds of impact did you see once you actually did the work? You had Mental Health Week on campus. You saw students participating in these activities or having that break. What was that like?

### **Caemon Scott**

The biggest thing, walking on campus and seeing people with “You Are Not Alone” shirts. A lot of people don't know, like, everything that went into building that. It took a lot. It took a lot. I was one person trying to manage this amount of money, put on this amount of events. Like, it really shows that what students could do number one. And number two, it shows that, like, we are really a community.

I said this all at the time. Lafayette was built on community. And UL is in the center of Lafayette's community. Now walking on campus, seeing these shirts like, extends that community. I see having people come to events and saying how much it means to them. It really means a lot. Like a lot.

I don't think people really, truly understand, like, everything that went into it. Being one person trying to you know, advocate for all these things. So, seeing it all come to fruition shows that number one, as a student, you can really do anything. If you put your mind to it and put the work behind it. But two, this is the generation for change.

We have the ability to do so much. We want to see the better, we want to do better, so be better. Just go get it done. And it's a, it's a testament to a lot of different things. It's really a testament to how far like God can bring you to whatever you give things to him as well. [Marie Elizabeth] Yeah.

### **Caemon Scott**

Cause I remember one day I was stressing. We weren't getting any money. I had just kind of got kind of a little, sticky situation with an entity that brings money into UL. And then I was stressed, walking back from class making calls. I remember I got called in to a meeting with Dr. Fusilier and Dean Zerangue.

I sit down I'm like venting my frustration. It's hard to get money. And like, we just got a \$1.1 million grant for mental health.

### **Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Wow. So, talk about timing.

### **Caemon Scott**

Perfect timing. It really just shows like when you put in work and give the rest to God. He's going to come through with this.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yeah. Wow. That's beautiful.

**Angeline Mathews**

OK so Mental Health Week featured like ice cream, yoga, puppies. There's a plethora of events I mean it's been this is the second year?

**Caemon Scott**

Next year will be the third year.

**Angeline Mathews**

OK. So next year will be the third. So, kind of like how did you pick those events and like how would you like to see them evolve?

**Caemon Scott**

The way I originally picked the events were the same that worked out at different schools and trying to bring it over here. Also, at the end of the day, we're not fully adults yet, so I kind of wanted to bring back a little bit of childhood memories and things like that.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

I love that.

**Caemon Scott**

Everything can just flow out your mind and we can all be a little kid again.

Now expanding into the future, I want to continue to get different student organizations involved as well. Especially as my time here is starting to roll out. I want this to be a collective effort through all of UL trying to encompass every student on the campus. So, hitting a variety of different aspects and hitting a variety of different organizations.



As each year passes, I look at the events and I see the positives, I see the bads. I see what we can really work on. So, continuing to try to monitor, and hopefully this year is going to, you know, I want everything to get better every year, but hopefully this year can really be the model for years. You know, going to the future, I kind of do want to kind of stay in a loop for the next two years after either way.

But I just want this to grow and expand to where everyone in the state. Can be like Mental Health Week is this week.

### **Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Wow, wow. And Angeline, I know especially for any students listening to this or even, you know, faculty, staff, I mean, we're talking about students, but it really is. The fall semester is so exciting.

But it can be, I know, like really traditionally overwhelming. So, I know you have Mental Health Week every November, and it seems like a really good time because it's right, as you know, I don't know, you're maybe in midterms.

### **Angeline Mathews**

The burnout.

### **Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Or just like you hit that wall. So, what kinds of resources did you learn in your reporting that you can just share for people who you know might need them.

### **Angeline Mathews**

Need help? So, like I said earlier, Uwill is the new, like, mental health resource that they rolled out 24/7 access to, like teletherapy. You can like pick if you want a certain like race of a therapist, a gender like a specialty, anything, you know, to kind of cater to you. There's like a crisis line if, like, you know, you don't want to call 911. It's not like an emergency, but you feel like you need some help.

You can call the crisis line. There's videos to watch, like how to get a better like sleep schedule, how to manage stress. Like as a freshman, that would have been very helpful to just learn how to be a college student. Like no one gives you a tutorial, but we have that now. And medication management for like any meds you might need.

So that's like Uwill and then they also offer QPR training. This is like all through the counseling and testing center. So, they like typically every semester I believe they send out like one mass email. Here are the resources. Like here is the email if you ever need to look us up like find it in your inbox. So, it mentions

Uwill, but then there's also QPR training, which is like a two hour long, like training session where they get like outside people to. It's "Question, Persuade, Refer" for anyone like considering suicide or like they're, you know, at the end of their rope and they need some help. It kind of teaches you how to like, question, persuade and refer from these negative thoughts to help you know this person that you might need to help get into a better place.

And the mindfulness studio, which is in the Rec Sports Center in Bourgeois Hall, they transformed like an old racquetball court to like a place where there's yoga mats and beanbags and yoga is held there. Meditation is held there. There's like a group exercise scheduled during the school year for students to go any time they like to go to yoga, or if you just need like, a moment to get your Zen.

Like, you can go from like 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Yes, I and there's one more. Oh, mental health week. There's one, hey. And that is like obviously a week featuring like, I think it's so important to like, do your schoolwork, but like go get on a fun jump, eat some ice cream and just, like, have fun, like, you need to unwind.

You need to unplug. Like all these different avenues. I feel like we can prioritize mental health, getting your medication, doing what you know you need and then go to the mindfulness studio, do some yoga, get some ice cream and just like, relax. Like, please, we need that.

### **Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yeah. I love what you said about just like, going back to being a kid. Yeah. And just like, what makes your heart happy. Before we go, Caemon, do you want to share anything else about Mental Health Week or just about anything you've learned as a student?

### **Caemon Scott**

So, we will be bringing it back, you know, next year. We've already been in a process and works of hitting different organizations and trying to make it as big as possible. I'm very excited. Because this can't be the first time I can really kind of step back a little bit and see the work and observe the work.

### **Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Yeah. You're passing the baton?

### **Caemon Scott**

But I'm definitely excited for the future of that. And, like, if I could really say one thing to anyone on campus is like, don't give up. You know, this is a community. If you're struggling, I promise you, you could go to a teacher. Like they're always going to point you in the right direction and the community at UL's helped me so much. But I think a lot of us students are afraid and don't really want to talk to teachers and

things like that. When they're really on our side. Once you realize that it can change your whole perspective in college because you're not supposed to do this alone. You're really not. That's why you've had that community of people around you. It's like sometimes when you have that one bad day, they're going to be there to help pick you up.

So also find that good community that you need to keep going. That's really it.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Well, that's amazing. Thank you.

**Caemon Scott**

Thank you.

**Marie Elizabeth Oliver**

Thank you both. I appreciate you being here taking time out of your schedule. And we appreciate you joining us in this conversation with La Louisiane, the official magazine of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette since 1989.

Check back next month for more discussions with members of our University community. You can listen to an archive of this interview and read Angeline's article about mental health on campus by visiting [louisiana.edu/magazine](http://louisiana.edu/magazine). KRVS is listener supported public radio for Acadiana, a service of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Thanks for listening.