

Student Stories Project: Natasha Eldridge

Audio version available at: <http://www.alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/students/eldridge.shtml>

[IU fight song]

Welcome to the Indiana University Student Stories Project, a production of the IU Alumni Association. I'm your host, Alana Salata. In this series, you'll get an insight into what it takes to be a student leader here at IU, from the perks –

“One of the members of the club brought the Mad Money show to campus. Now, that was a big step for both the school and the club.”

– to the hard work –

“Graduate school takes up more time and energy than you can anticipate.”

– to the memories that will last a lifetime.

“I traveled to India in the fall of 2006 with 60 students from the Kelley School of Business.”

Join me on this journey through the lives of IU student leaders.

[IU fight song]

SALATA: Today we're at IU East speaking with Natasha Eldridge of the Student Events Team.

ELDRIDGE: My name is Natasha Eldridge. I'm a junior here on campus. I am a business major, and my hometown is Knightstown, Indiana. I am president of Student Events Team, and my interests off campus – I'm getting ready to get married, and I also love to play softball. I play, like, every weekend. I grew up playing, and my family's just big in softball – so, softball and hanging out with my family.

Why did you choose to attend IU East?

It's small and it's close to home, and I'm a family person, so being away from my family was one of the things I didn't want to do. So choosing a bigger college would have affected me from being gone a lot. Also, my high school class was 42. We had 42 people in our class, and I thought, well, if that's small, and I liked it that way, then I'll like it here because this is small. We have about a 1,500-person campus.

Tell me about a meaningful or enjoyable experience you have had at IU East.

A couple years ago I went on an alternative spring break trip to New Orleans. I was the leader of that. I organized it, wrote a grant for it, and we went down and cleaned up five houses. We gutted all of it, we took everything out, and we got to meet a couple of the people. And they were, they were really nice, like really thankful that we came down to do it. We didn't get to meet one couple, but they were an older couple and they sent us a card about two weeks after we got home telling us "thank you" and everything. They were in their 90s, so they weren't going to be able to do it by themselves.

What advice would you give to incoming freshmen and other students just starting out at IU East?

If you have questions, ask them. Don't be afraid to ask anybody here. Get involved – definitely get involved in any clubs or organizations, because it pays off: it can go on your résumé, and you can also get scholarships and grants and a whole bunch of money, too, if you're involved.

Tell me a little about the Student Events Team at IU East.

It's a student club here on campus. We get student activity fees from all the students, and we hold different events here on campus, and then we also have trips that we go on. One of the big events that we have that's coming up in August is our Student Welcome Back. This year the theme is "Welcome to the Jungle," so we'll decorate the whole campus up in a jungle-like atmosphere, and we'll have free food, and we're going to have a live band out here. The radio stations usually come out, and all the banks come out, and it's just a big student organization fair, and then there's a whole bunch of games, too, that the students can participate in. There's giveaways, there's a whole bunch of stuff that happens that day. And then one of the trips that we're looking at doing is going to Las Vegas or the Grand Canyon. Last year during November we went to the Bahamas. We went on a cruise for a week, and we paid \$350, and that was for our transportation, food, you name it, it counted. So what we do is, we try on our trips to get student discounts for students so they don't have to pay near as much, and then they can go and have a good time and not have to spend a lot of money. So we do on- and off-campus events.

How did you find out about the Student Events Team, and why did you decide to become involved?

I graduated in 2004, and I came here in August of '04. I walked into this office to get my student ID, and I saw a sign that said "Student Events Team" and it described a little bit about what they did, and I was like, "I'll just check it out." So I went to the first meeting and started just helping with the banners and fliers and stuff, and then I got into it a little bit and I was like, I really liked it. And then the next year I had an idea: I asked them, I was like, "Do you guys ever do a spirit week for your basketball team?" Because our sports here are not very big – we have a couple of sports and that's it. And I was like, "Do you guys ever do a spirit week or a homecoming week for your basketball team?" and they said no. So they said, "Why don't you head that up and be the chairperson of it?" So I headed it up, I was the chairperson of that for that first year, and then ever since then we've done it every year. It's a week that we dress up each day – different dress-up days – and then at the end of the week we have a pep session for the team, and then we go to the basketball game and wear our "Red Zone" T-shirts and stuff. Usually the cheerleaders come

out and the basketball team's there – we pie a faculty or staff person in the face with a pie. But this year we're doing a homecoming – we're not doing a spirit week, we're doing a homecoming. So we're going to get all of the IU East alumni back and we're going to invite them all out and make it a little bit bigger this year.

Tell me about a Student Event Team event or program that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of.

I'd have to say Relay For Life. This past – actually just a couple of weeks ago, June 16 and 17 – Student Events Team had a team, and we went and we walked for 24 hours at the Wayne County Fairgrounds, and we raised – all together, the event raised \$152,000 for the American Cancer Society. And it was just really special, just because my mom survived cancer, and everybody was there as a team and we were working together. So it was pretty cool.

What challenges have you faced during your participation in the Student Events Team?

I think balancing everything – like, SET takes a lot of time, and then I've also got 12 credit hours of school, and then I have other responsibilities here on campus, so balancing all of that is a little bit of a challenge, just because in high school I was involved a little bit, but I wasn't nearly as involved as what I am in college.

How have your leadership skills developed over the course of your participation in the Student Events Team?

My leadership skills have gotten a lot better. In high school I was on student council, but I never held a position. And then this year, when they elected me president, I thought that I was somebody who would have been a good choice. Last year I was a Student LEADER. We represent IU East at, like, board meetings and other special meetings here on campus. And I think that just with my time and how well I organize events and stuff, that the president would have been the best choice for me.

What other organizations are you a part of here at IU East?

I am in Student Events Team, Student Alumni Association, and then I was also a part of Student LEADERS last year, but I will not be one this year.

What are your future goals, and how do you think IU East has helped prepare you to meet those goals?

My future goals, of course, are to graduate college in a couple years, and then get some other students in here who can definitely be leaders like I am and like all the other guys are in this office. And also just to live a healthy and wise life and do what I can do the best I can.

What will you miss the most when you graduate?

I think planning the events and seeing all the students having a good time, because when we have all the students here and they're having a good time, it makes us feel good that we've planned the event and it's ran smooth and we've done our part, so I think that'll be the biggest thing I miss.

We've been talking with Natasha Eldridge of IU East's Student Events Team.

[IU fight song]

This series was produced by the Indiana University Alumni Association, with special thanks to the IU Marching Hundred and director Dave Woodley. I'm Alana Salata.

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