

I GET ANOTHER CHANCE



DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

By Barry Cassidy

Very rarely do you fail at something and get another chance to fix it.

Such is the case with the only blackspot on my resume.

In 2014, my father summoned me to Pittsburgh because he could not care for himself. He epitomized a cantankerous old union organizer who wanted to die at home. He had already alienated everyone in the family with his behavior, and throughout my life, I was the only one who stood up to him when I felt he was wrong. At the time, he had already banned me from his house and had to gulp to ask for my help. But I was happy to spend his final years with him, making my mom's favorite dishes and watching him smile, laugh, and rant about the Republicans.

I never have too much of an issue finding a job, so I picked up a couple of consulting jobs in Pittsburgh. I am from Pittsburgh but moved away when I was 3 or 4, on a wild ride of a union organizer who moved from place to place and ended up growing up in a community outside of Newark, New Jersey.

For some reason, my projects get a lot of press coverage. One of the projects I took on was preserving the Westinghouse atom smasher in Forest Hills. Although the site was contaminated, it had an incredible structure. It was a historic artifact, and I was going to restore and save it.

The Westinghouse Atom Smasher was a 5V Van de Graaff electrostatic nuclear accelerator operated by Westinghouse in Forest Hills, PA. It was an early example of how nuclear science could be used for



energy production. The atom smasher was used to discover the photofission of uranium and thorium.

I met with the school district, which believed that using the building as an educational center would be beneficial. Their vision for the Forest Hills particle accelerator was to create a space that honors the past while preparing young people for the future. In this historical center, active teaching and learning take place daily.

In partnership with the Woodland Hills School District and other stakeholders, I aimed to transform the accelerator facility into a historic site that pays tribute to the groundbreaking work accomplished there. Additionally, to provide a state-of-the-art set of labs and classrooms where students could pursue studies that may one day lead to the next significant advancement in science, reminiscent of the breakthroughs once showcased by the accelerator.

Woodland Hills was not the most impressive school district. It catered to a sizable population of low-income and minority students. Their interest felt more like a press release than anything else. I realized this after I raised \$4,000 and conducted a study. It was doable, but the school district was not equipped to do the job.

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