

## Interview with Dillon Hagy – American Philanthropic Organization

At the first Business of Humanity® Project New Venture Competition in November 2017, Dillon Hagy, a student from Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), won first place for his start-up idea, *American Philanthropic Apparel*. Since two years have passed, we reached out to discuss the progress that Dillon has made since the competition and what he envisions for the future of his company.

The opportunity to both participate and place in the New Venture Competition gave Dillon the initial funding to move his project forward. The winning funds helped him to hire an attorney who helped him trademark his company, form an LLC, and create his private foundation – The APO Foundation. Dillon has now changed the name of his company to the *American Philanthropic Organization and is trademarked as “APO”*. APO exists in order to support the works of the APO Foundation through the following: (1) manufacturing and selling apparel, (2) leveraging their online fundraising platform, (3) leading student organizations, and (4) volunteering for The APO Foundation. A benefit to this is when their customers make donations on the APO website, they receive tax deductible receipts from The APO Foundation.

The initial idea for APO started through Dillon’s work with a student organization at IUP. During the BoH Project New Venture Competition, Dillon realized the scalability of his business, and after the competition was over, he decided to scale up his plan. One of the ways in which he was able to expand his idea was to add a fellow IUP student as an equal partner in his business. Mr. Michael Roby, who specializes in Operations and Supply Chain Management, helped Dillon set up his business and figure out a workable plan to take their initial ideas and turn them into a reality. Another way in which they were able to expand their social impact was to add a community philanthropist as a new partner in their business. Mr. Dominic Frontino who lives in Riverside, CA has joined APO as the VP of Volunteer Programs, and the private foundation as the Director of Programs. Dom is in charge of taking donations

from APO, donors, and nonprofit partners and using them to socially impact the lives of struggling veterans. Because of Dom, The APO Foundation Inc. now runs a 1,500 SQ FT donation and programs room at a veterans' homeless shelter in Riverside, CA that is home to 200+ residents. The donation room provides necessities like food, water, and cleaning supplies for the veteran residents, and the social programs provide fellowship and support through activities like fishing, cookouts, and much more.

The company's overall mission is to strengthen America through social entrepreneurship. As stated by Dillon, APO's initial goal is "to help every veteran in need across the nation." This is a goal that Dillon is truly passionate about and one that hits close to home for him. Dillon began serving in the Army at 17 years old, and at 19 years old, he was attached to a Green Beret team that was deployed to Afghanistan on a tour that lasted for one year. While Dillon was ready to move forward after serving in the Army for four years, his experiences in the military are at the heart of what drives APO.

So, what does APO do? Right now, APO is an E-commerce business that manufactures and sells apparel, establishes student organizations on Universities that offer students opportunities to fund raise and perform community service to impact veterans, oversees volunteers to run the programs of a private foundation called The APO Foundation Inc. which lowers the charities overhead costs and allows 100% of donations to go directly to the veteran, and leverages their online platform to fund raise for The APO Foundation to support their donation room and social programs.

At the time of this article, APO just launched their first APO manufactured line of apparel. The apparel is designed with five main goals in mind: style, quality, price, pride, and social impact. APO hosted a trial apparel campaign, called Veterans for Valentines, to test out their trial clothing, and 90% of the inventory was sold. The inventory offered by APO is a product of much research by Dillon and Michael.

Another key factor in moving APO forward was revamping their website. This new website has just launched and offers some key features. The most important feature is what APO calls the "e-

commerce giving experience.” Every time a customer purchases apparel, an equivalent apparel item or supplies veterans need will be donated, and APO will send them pictures of their donation. APO also offers customers the ability to donate online to student organization projects and the APO Foundation fund raising campaigns. APO-IUP hosted their first annual student organization fundraiser in support of community partners to help bring supplies to homeless veterans in need. APO also offers a club for patriotic individuals to make a monthly pledge to help veterans in need, it’s called The Patriot Club. APO believes that veterans’ issues can only be solved if everyone collectively works together, and a monthly pledge no matter the size is a key initiative for APO.

Whether a customer donates through an apparel purchase, or donates directly to a veteran in need, they will receive a picture of their donations. APO’s website is designed to be a platform where customers and supporters can view their impact and the impact of others anytime, anywhere, with 100% of donations going directly to the veterans through The APO Foundation. On the website, customers can also download their deductible PDF receipts at any time, as donations made on the website go directly to The APO Foundation.

Because Dillon started the idea that is now known as APO through his student organization at IUP, Dillon has decided to provide other students with that same opportunity and has been spending a great deal of time to help other colleges and universities start their own APO chapters. So far, APO has a student chapter established at IUP. Dillon states “APO student chapters are an invaluable asset to any University, and this semester APO-IUP is going to prove it.” APO has a goal of establishing 25 chapters by the end of 2020. It is important to note that APO does not just help get these student chapters established and then walk away. They are true mentors and provide extensive support to their chapters. By being a part of their APO student chapter, these students gain an opportunity to supplement the learning they are doing in the classroom by applying that knowledge to tackle real-world problems.

When asked about his vision for the future of APO, Dillon has set both short-term and long-term goals. By the end of 2020, Dillon hopes to have 25 student organizations, \$30,000 in apparel sales, \$15,000 in nonprofit grants for the APO Foundation, and 1,000 Patriot Clubbers. In the long-term, he envisions APO being publicly traded on the New York Stock exchange at a \$10B+ evaluation and playing a significant role in helping to solve the veterans' homeless and veterans' suicide pandemic by 2030. At the start of 2020, he plans to seek additional investors who are willing to offer \$50,000 - \$100,000 which will allow APO to further expand the business. Dillon and Michael work full-time jobs while also working full-time on APO, and their new partner Dom works full time at the donation and programs room. They are not paying themselves for their time and do not expect to be receiving their equity returns from the company for another 10 years, but they emphasize that the reward for them is how they can help impact communities and help veterans. They are holding themselves to the same vision they had when they started this idea at IUP. With the focus and determination that they have, it is clear that Dillon and Michael are well on their way to accomplishing these goals.