



MASTERS Audio Club
November 2014
Eden Sassoon and Seth Maxwell:
The Thirst Project

Eden Sassoon is the daughter of legendary beauty icon Vidal Sassoon and owner of the EDEN by Eden Sassoon Finishing Studio in Los Angeles. **Seth Maxwell** is the founder and CEO of The Thirst Project, which has made a bold commitment to ending the world's clean water crisis and raised over \$8 million in less than 6 years. Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Eden and Seth share their passion and commitment to providing clean water and hope, and Eden shares memories of her famous father, Vidal Sassoon.

Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here. Welcome to this wonderful issue of MASTERS. And all week long I've been telling myself that everything happens for a reason because, believe it or not, I was sitting with these two amazing individuals that I'm going to introduce to you in a little bit—a week ago we were together.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: At the Beverly Hilton Hotel, had an incredible experience. We were all emotional, hugging each other. That was the best thing ever.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: And then I found out the next day that nothing recorded.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: That the disc was blank and don't know how it happened. So all—I was too embarrassed to even tell you guys. So I like held off for a couple of days and then Sunday morning text you, “Uh, by the way—” *[laughs]* “—we have to redo it.” So thanks again for coming together to do this interview. I'm sitting with Eden Sassoon, who is the daughter of the legendary beauty icon Vidal Sassoon, and also with Seth Maxwell, who is the CEO and founder of The Thirst Project, which you're gonna learn about today. So, Eden and Seth, welcome to MASTERS.

Eden: Thank you.

Seth: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Winn: And I know you guys got home late last night. You were speaking at a beauty school. You raised some money last night for The Thirst Project and—

Eden: Yes.

Winn: —we found out in the last interview, Eden, that we have to just hold Seth back because all he wants to do is jump in talk about The Thirst Project.

Eden: *[laughs]* Thank God.

Winn: But—which is great. But I love it that we're going to get to know the two of you personally because I believe that it's—yeah, it's the cause but it's also the people behind the cause. And people want to get to know who's really behind this and, "Do I like them? Do I trust them?"

Eden: Definitely.

Winn: "Is this somebody who I can bring home to Mom?" You know? It's got to be that type of a relationship, and that's what makes the difference when anybody is trying to promote any type of worthy charitable cause. So, Eden—

Eden: Yes.

Winn: You—my gosh, what was that like to have your father, this icon in the beauty industry—and by the way there's not one hairdresser alive today that you couldn't stop and say, "Who influenced you? Who are your top three mentors in your career?" Whether they met your father or not, he's on that list, especially the most famous people in the industry today. So whether it's a Trevor Sorbie or a Paul Mitchell or a Vivienne Mackinder or you name it, they're all gonna name your father.

Eden: It gives me chills and it has a huge smile on my face because not only was it the work that he did, which was excellence daily, years that he put into it, but the human being that he was. I hate saying "was." Is.

Winn: Is that hard?

Eden: It's—

Winn: It's been, what, two and a half years?

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: Since he passed.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: So we're recoding this interview. We're in October of 2014 and he passed in May—

Eden: May.

Winn: —of 2012.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: Yeah.

Eden: But every day he's with me. So I still think of it as—I don't say "was." Like his spirit's with me. And just because physically his body's not, it's a very—death is a very interesting concept. So the man that he is, was, that's what is so impressive and that's also, when you speak to somebody that knows Dad, it wasn't just, "So, he created the bob. He was fabulous behind the chair. He had these moves and these, you know, the way about him and the attitude and the discipline and, you know, if you came to work not dressed a certain way you were out the door." It wasn't just that. It was, when you were with him, he stopped and looked at you in the eye and really took the time to be with you.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Eden: And so I think he left a lot behind other than just being the great Vidal Sassoon, beauty icon.

Winn: I think for some people it can be somewhat of a letdown, you know? You build up who this person is and you just know them from afar, you know them because of their fame and their celebrity, and then you meet them and it's like, "Oh well, that was kind of a letdown."

Eden: Right.

Winn: With your father, not only was it never a letdown, you left—

Eden: It was more.

Winn: —you left his presence—

Eden: Right.

Winn: —thinking, "Wow!"

Eden: Inspired.

Winn: Yeah.

Eden: Completely, yeah. Yeah.

Winn: So you—

Eden: Which is great to live up to because it, you know, it makes me want to be more and like him and, really, I guess that's kind of how he raised me. Wow, it kind of just hit me. *[laughs]* To be that woman—

Winn: Right.

Eden: —to dig deep and to find what's in me and to bring it out and how does that affect other people. And it does.

Winn: You were just telling me before we started recording that you were with a bunch of beauty school students in another state and—

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: —you're planning a slumber party at your house with ten other girls.

Eden: Yep.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: So obviously—

Eden: Yep.

Winn: —you kind of are following in your father's—

Eden: Yep.

Winn: —footsteps. It's about the relationship.

Eden: Mm-hmm, for sure.

Winn: I know people who have your father's famous haircuts tattooed on their bodies. *[laughs]*

Eden: Look at it. I see those tattoos. The first time I saw one, a friend of mine sent it to me. And I have tattoos so I know what it means to actually put ink on my body. And I saw that, my heart almost stopped. It really played like a kind of a mind—it messed with my mind but I was like, "Wow, that is one of the utmost respectful things you can do." And they're out there, everywhere. They have the cuts, the name, the scissors, the this, the that. It's really fun.

Winn: So what was Dad like as a dad?

Eden: Dad was—I mean, Dad was someone—he was a nut. There were all different parts of Dad. When he was working, he'd come home late and he'd come and he'd sing all these English songs to us. Don't ask me to sing 'cause I can't.

But he'd put on his little top hat and he'd get a cane and he would, you know, he would really try to be playful and bring joy as much as he could. And then on the weekends, you know, we had—there were four of us kids. So four of us kids with all of our friends, he would find a way to make it happy for everybody. He wanted the kids that didn't have maybe the parents who had what we had to be involved, to enjoy, to—you know, share. Some parents didn't like it too much but he still wanted everyone to have just as much fun. You know, and then there were times where, if he wasn't happy, you knew he was not happy. And sometimes his communication skills maybe weren't the best at an earlier age. *[laughs]*

Winn: Really?

Eden: But he definitely learned later on in life how to communicate. I think as an artist, you know, it's in you, and he took it out in physical ways where he was really into sports and swimming and Pilates, and obviously the art and the craft and architecture. But as a human emotion, one-on-one, it was hard.

Winn: Was there a time where he put down his scissors and said, "I'm never going to cut hair again"?

Eden: Yeah, when he stopped.

Winn: So he didn't cut hair right up until the end?

Eden: No.

Winn: So, it had been years, correct?

Eden: Yeah. And I asked him, "Dad, why?" He said, "Darling, once you're the best you don't go back."

Winn: Oh, wow. So what were his—

Eden: He cut the dogs' hairs. *[laughs]*

Winn: Did he? *[laughs]* I could cut the dog's hair.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: So what were his expectations of you, and what was that like, trying to live up to that? Did you feel that, as you're growing up? As, "I'm Vidal Sassoon's daughter"? Did you—was that, like, an awareness that you had on a regular basis?

Eden: The pressure of growing up in a household where his career was based around looking good and having children—two daughters—he wanted the

best from us. And part of that was, “Look good.” In his mind he didn’t know any different.

Winn: “You don’t look good, we don’t look good.”

Eden: Exactly. *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]*

Eden: And that was hard. At eleven I was sent to Weight Watchers fat camp. And I didn’t want to go. I can look back and be grateful—because that’s who I am—on all the experiences I’ve had. But I still have struggles.

Winn: Yeah. What was some of the best lessons that you learned from your dad? And how does that drive you today? ‘Cause now, you are in the beauty industry now. You have EDEN by Eden Sassoon, which is a Finishing Studio here in Beverly Hills, there on Sunset Boulevard.

Eden: Sunset.

Winn: Beautiful, incredible location.

Eden: Thank you. And then I have EDEN by Eden Sassoon Pilates.

Winn: Okay.

Eden: So if you look at that, when he asked me what I was going to do, I really looked deep inside myself and said, “Where’s my passion lie?” And it lies exactly to all those places that he was pushing me. Where I—when at a young age looked at it as maybe a fear or “How could you?” or “Why?” but truly that’s my passion. So I opened businesses around it so that others could enjoy it with me. They were all lessons, even the tears I had, even when you want to run in your room and put your pillow and say, “I hate you.” Those are the best lessons. I think the pain that we go through, the journey, that’s the evolution of our soul. That’s who we become. That’s where we find out, “All right, who am I? What am I up against and how am I going to get to that other side?”

Winn: Your father obviously left an incredible legacy, which will live on forever. Do you feel that pressure yourself? I mean, you got his name and you feel that pressure?

Eden: You know, Winn, at times I do, and then I stop and say, “Wait a minute. This isn’t a pressure.” Especially being involved with people, the two people I’m sitting with at the table right now. This is a gift. This is something that—it’s a responsibility and it’s how I look at it. And if I take it as one, and I see how just yesterday, 20 plus, 30 plus young women responded to me, it’s my dream come true. I mean, I’m doing exactly what I’ve been put here to do and what

my higher power, who I call God, has said, “Here you go, baby girl. This is who you are. Now share it.”

Winn: You had mentioned to me once that your father had asked you a question about whether or not he would be remembered. Can you share that with us?

Eden: He did. He said—

Winn: ‘Cause that just blows me away that that thought would even come to your father.

Eden: It was a moment—because we would have lunch all the time together and he’s like, “Darling,” —he would always say, “Darling” or “Baby Girl” —and he thinks before he speaks, so it was, everything was *[pause]*, “Do you think I’ll be remembered?” *[sighs]* I mean, and of course I’m very just—when I speak I speak. I’m like, “Dad, I’m pretty sure” —

Winn: *[laughs]*

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: —“that you will be remembered.” And in my mind, you know, and the sadness in my heart knowing that sooner or later he wasn’t going to be here, *I’m gonna be damnedest if I’m left here to also carry on your legacy and the man that you have—that you are, were, and what you’ve created and instilled in me.*

Winn: There were many of us in the beauty industry that would get behind your father for whatever he told us to get behind. *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: Whether it was, you know, Habitat for Humanity or whatever it was, he had many causes and things that he was passionate about. And when Vidal called, you said, “Yes.”

Eden: ‘Cause you trust him.

Winn: Yeah, absolutely.

Eden: Yeah, yeah. And, you know, I feel like I have that, too. I reach out and I ask, and I don’t do it often so when I do it’s as if—you know what? I lead by example. So people think, “I respect her.” I want—a lot of the girls yesterday, “I want to be like you when I grow up.” Wow. Whoa. Wait.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]* It took me a while to get here but, wow, what an honor.

Winn: Yeah.

Eden: So for me to be in the business and to reach out to some, I would only hope that they could respect and honor my judgment and say, “You know what? I want to be behind that. I think what she’s doing is awesome.”

Winn: Let’s—I’m gonna switch gears here. I’m gonna pull Seth into this.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: I’ve got to read and give our listeners more information on who Seth is. First of all, Seth, how old are you?

Seth: I’m 26.

Winn: Twenty-six years old. And he looks like he’s 12. But. *[laughs]*

Eden: Beautiful.

Winn: *[laughs]* Did you see the picture that the three of us took?

Eden: Yeah. *[laughs]*

Winn: Did you see it?

Seth: I can’t help it, you guys. I can’t help it.

Winn: No.

Eden: I love that picture, by the way. *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* It’s a great little picture. But Seth, he’s like grinning ear to ear so much that his eyes are closed. And I like blew up the picture, “Are his eyes open?” And they’re barely open.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: I’m squinty.

Winn: You’re squinty. It’s a—*[laughs]*

Eden: The best.

Winn: But there’s something—the reason why I wanted to know your age is because people are thinking it and there’s a whole message behind that of what this generation is up to. But, so again, you’re the founder and CEO of The Thirst Project, which is a creative and diverse nonprofit organization with the bold commitment to ending the clean water crisis. So I’m reading this. In less than six years, The Thirst Project has raised over \$8 million and funded over 938

water projects in 12 countries, giving clean water and hope to hundreds of thousands of people. You're also a speaker, you're a storyteller, you're an actor, you're a musician. So all of those things, I'm sure, have served you well in your now capacity. You were a speaker at the TEDx Hollywood Youth Conference, which, I'm sure if there's anybody—and I don't know how there would be—anybody listening to this that is not familiar with the TED speeches, the TED Talks. You go on to YouTube and just type in "TED" and every topic will come up. Every—anybody who is everybody from presidents to CEOs has been speakers at the TED. So congratulations on that.

Seth: Thank you.

Winn: It's really cool 'cause you have to deliver a message in 20 minutes. You got 20 minutes to nail it.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: That's so much more difficult. Give me five hours and I'll eventually get the audience to like me.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* And I'll get around to delivering my message, but to be able to deliver a message in 20 minutes is pretty incredible. You also spoke at the Nexus Global Youth Summit, gave the 2014 commencement address for Masters of Science in Communications School at Northwestern University. You met at the White House with the Obama administration officials to discuss ways to activate Millennials for social justice and social change. You went to the White House.

Seth: Yeah. *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: You ever been to the White House, Eden?

Eden: No.

Winn: I haven't been to the White House.

Eden: No, no.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: Did your dad ever go to the White House?

Eden: I don't know.

Winn: Huh. We need to find that out. But Seth went to the White House.

Eden: Yeah. *[laughs]*

Winn: Okay.

Seth: Get with it, guys.

Winn: I know, I know, I know. See? *[laughs]*

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: Gosh, we have a lot of catching up to do. You were named—I love this—named *Forbes* “30 Under 30” in 2014, and that awards ceremony is coming up Sunday, right?

Seth: Well, yeah. There’s—

Winn: A week?

Seth: —a week from Sunday.

Winn: Congratulations.

Seth: Thank you.

Winn: So you’re going off to Boston and you’re getting this incredible award.

Seth: Yeah, it’ll be fun.

Winn: Which we’ll talk more about what that means and what that’s all about. But you also received the VH1 Do Something Award.

Eden: Whoo!

Winn: Which is also really, really cool. In fact, you know what? Let me just kind of talk about those two right now and so that people can just even be more impressed than they already are.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: Right? *[laughs]* It’s like—.

Winn: So the past winners of the VH1 Do Something Award includes Richard Ludlow, who in 2005 started a student organ donation thing, this nonprofit organization at Yale University. In 2006, the VH1 Do Something Award was given to Jordan Schwartz, at 12 years old. Twelve years old. Geez. And he is the artistic producer of the Children’s Bilingual Theater. In 2008, Chad Bullock

received that award by training 45,000 teens to do anti-tobacco projects. You know, that list just goes on and on.

Eden: Wow.

Winn: And the 30—let me just read this “30 Under 30” from *Forbes*: “Presenting their third annual ‘30 Under 30,’ a tally of the brightest stars in 15 different fields under the age of 30. This is a time to be young and ambitious. These founders and funders, brand-builders and do-gooders, aren’t waiting for a proper bump up the career ladder. Their goals are way bigger and perfectly suited to the dynamic entrepreneurial and impatient digital world they grew up in.” So, you’re kind of busy?

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: *[laughs]* I have cool friends.

Winn: *[laughs]* So, talk about the White House and what was that experience like?

Seth: It was crazy. I honestly didn’t know, like, what to expect. You know, you’ve seen in film and movies, you know, you kind of have this idea but it was crazy. We had to submit a whole, like, history of like every country I’ve traveled to, passport information. Which I’m sure they have anyways. But, like, you have to submit all this information in advance to do these, like, background checks and then get loaded in and it was amazing. I mean, the Secretary for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Education and all these amazing people were there, as well as other staffers outside of just the Cabinet, who basically discussed what some of the goals of the president were in the next, you know, remainder of his term. And discussed, “Hey, if you were in our jobs, how would you reach these goals specifically focused on activating Millennials to help bring about social change and social justice?” So it was fun and intimidating and amazing. Amazing.

Winn: Millennial generation—again everybody, I’m sure, knows but people born after 1981. It’s the largest generation that’s ever hit the U.S. population, over a hundred million strong. I’m a Baby Boomer. What are you, a Gen X?

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: You’re a Gen X. But Millennials, some people say that they’re the highest—most high-maintenance generation in U.S. history but they’re also gonna be the highest performing generation in U.S. history. And there’s so many examples of that out there. People—these do-gooders and people who are just changing the world, and you’re one of them.

Seth: Thank you.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Seth: Thank you.

Eden: Oh, I'm getting chills every time, Seth.

Winn: I watched the YouTube TEDx speech that you did, and you started off your thing, "What if only 18-year-olds were allowed to vote? What if we voted an 18-year-old as president of the United States?" And yet there was a point behind that. Share that with us.

Seth: Well, I think it's the idea that we have this mentality that you have to be a certain age or have a certain title or earn a certain amount of money before you're able to make impact in the world. And the reality is, you know, you contrast some of the world's biggest challenges or problems that we face: whether it's the global water crisis, whether it's the HIV/AIDS epidemic, whether it's food scarcity and insecurity, and contrast that with the existing number of people who have amazing titles, amazing bank accounts, amazing, you know, years of experience and wisdom, and yet there's still hundreds and thousands and millions of people suffering from easily preventable things that we already know how to solve. And so I basically posture that, you know, it doesn't matter if you're, you know, 40, 50, 60, 80. It doesn't matter if you've got millions and billions of dollars, there are still kids dying every day of easily preventable diseases or suffering at the hands of, you know, tyrannical governments. So clearly, once we get to that place in our life, that won't solve the problem. Having more money won't solve the problem. You know, having a higher education won't solve the problem. There are already a lot of, you know, to put it lovingly, old, rich, incredibly intelligent people.

Winn: He's talking about us right now.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: Old, old, old, incredibly intelligent people.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: That's okay.

Winn: 'Cause he looked at us, didn't he? He did.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: When he said that.

Seth: It's okay. I love you guys. *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: But the reality is, like, there are a lot of those people and yet still we live in a world where there are all these crazy, huge issues that are easily preventable. So clearly, being at that place isn't the magic bullet to solve these problems. It takes action. It takes a conscious choice now, wherever you're at, whether you earn, you know, \$10,000 a year or \$10 million a year, whether you're, you know, ten years old or whether you're 50 years old or 80 years old. You know, it's a conscious choice to take action, and so I think it was basically just a, sort of poking fun point to get people's attention, to say, "Hey," like, "today, right now we should be activating these people who have demonstrated that they can and are interested in making impact."

Winn: I know. I used to say when I get my life together then I'll do volunteer work. And it wasn't until I started doing volunteer work that I felt like my life started to come together.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: And maybe a lot of people are just waiting for that. They're waiting, "Well, when I earn this amount of money, when I get that title, when I move up that corporate ladder, when I get the dream car, when I have the three kids, then I'll look back on my life and say, 'Okay, now I'm in a position to give back and to raise money and raise awareness.'" And I think it's just that constant delay, delay, delay, delay rather than realizing today is the day.

Seth: Yeah.

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: Well, and the reality is, the world can't wait for you to have a million dollars. They can't wait for you to have the perfect car, three kids. The world needs you now. Like, people are hurting today. And that's the amazing thing, I think, about young people, is that because of—you know, admittedly they are at an advantage in a lot of ways than what we lovingly call old people—which, I'm in that category as well. We call anybody, you know, over 25 an old person. And so basically the advantage—

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* Okay, all right.

Seth: The advantage that young people will have is, you know, by and large don't have families or, you know, really crazy careers or mortgage payments and so, as a result of not having those responsibilities, you have the ability to then invest in other initiatives. And it's interesting talking about Millennials because, like, we—*Time* magazine came out a year ago, a little over, with an article calling Millennials the "Me Me Me Generation," saying that we are the most self-centered, narcissistic generation the world's ever seen.

Winn: I thought that was your generation, Eden? I thought—

Eden: Never.

Winn: —that you're the me-me-me.

Eden: *[laughs]* No!

Seth: First of all, every generation calls the generation after that—

Eden: Yeah, wait, I thought it was you, Winn.

Winn: Okay. *[laughs]*

Seth: But the thing that we think is just total B.S. about that is, like, we see hundreds of thousands of students every day in our programs doing incredibly selfless, creative, generous things. And the reality is, that's just not true of most people that we see in that age bracket. And so it's an interesting time right now. Eden and I were actually at an event a couple months back and there was an amazing speaker, a guy named Peter Diamandis and he said something that was super interesting. He said Millennials, or at least this generation that's emerging out of college right now and behind them, are uniquely positioned to change the world because they are the most (a) educated generation the world had ever seen. They're the first generation where such emphasis has been placed on everyone going to college. Simultaneously, they are the most under or unemployed generation. So as a result, you have these highly intelligent people with a lot of free time on their hands. Who, number three, are also the most connected generation the world has ever seen. I can actually have friends when I'm 12 with someone in Syria via Facebook, Skype, Twitter. I can actually have interactions and in real time know what's happening to people around the world. So you have this highly intelligent, under or unemployed generation with lots of time on their hands, who are globally connected and care more about what's happening in the world than ever before. So we're uniquely positioned to take action. And about two decades ago, even *Sesame Street* domestically changed all their programming from ABCs and 123s to a significant emphasis on sharing and caring and building community. And so as a result, you have this highly generally empathetic generation so that combination is really amazing to see when they're not only presented with real-world, huge problems but given tangible ways they can make impact and called to do so, we've seen that they do.

Winn: Well, this is the first generation that has grown up with the Internet since the day they were born. I mean, I don't think I even knew growing up, I didn't know what was going on in the next block over from where I lived.

Eden: *[laughs]* Right. No, it was seven days to get a letter.

Winn: You know, whereas this generation—exactly.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: Every—very, very aware and everything’s immediately—

Eden: Now.

Winn: —there at your fingertips, so to speak, to get information.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: And I’ve heard it said that 65 percent of the workforce will be gone in the next ten years because of retirement age. Well, who are you going to replace them with?

Seth: Right.

Winn: You’re going to replace them with Millennials and so to have this attitude that Millennials aren’t of value and that—it’s really very small-minded to think that because, again, my company is filled with Millennials. To me it’s the most inspiring generation.

Eden: Mm-hm.

Winn: It feels like they keep me young and I want to be a part of what they’re all a part of because they’re the catalyst for making incredible change.

Seth: Mm.

Winn: So talk to us about youth empowerment and then we’re going to get into The Thirst Project because that’s basically what you’re doing. You’re out there trying to beat the bushes, so to speak, and get people riled up to do something.

Seth: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, it amazing. So for us—we’ll talk more about the organization later, I guess. But the way that we reach our goals, our mission with our organization, is by educating students about the global water crisis and then challenging those students to take action. And so, for us, you know, I kind of hate the word *empower*. I mean, students are already empowered and equipped. Like they just—they don’t need to be told how. They need permission. They need freedom to do what they already can do and what I think, frankly, the rest of the world thinks they can’t do. One of the most depressing things I think in the world is the fact that so many people buy into this belief that the best the world has to offer you, like the best you could possibly look forward to, is that you’re born so you can go to school; you go to school to get good grades; get good grades to get into a good college; get into a good college to get more good grades; get more good grades to get a

good job; get a good job to make lots of money; make lots of money so you can buy lots of cool stuff; and then finally you buy lots of cool stuff so you can die. Like—and that’s the best most people think that they have for themselves. And so for us at Thirst Project, like we know, (a) what’s happening around the world and, (b) the way that we can be a part of, you know, (a) a more adventurous story for ourselves and, (b) helping to frame and shape the world that we all really want to live in, the world that works for everybody. And so we want to invite people into something more adventurous than that. And so that’s really—I mean, we’re not really empowering students, we’re just releasing them to be who they are.

Eden: Yes.

Winn: Well, I liked what you said: that you’re giving them permission.

Seth: Mm.

Winn: Which I love because oftentimes that’s what people are waiting for.

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: Mm.

Winn: Because I get those emails—I’m sure you do, too, Eden: “I really want to do hair and makeup for a photo shoot.” I’m like, “Cool, how many have you done?” “Well, I haven’t done any yet.”

Eden: Right.

Winn: “Well, why not?” You know? ‘Cause cameras are so hard to find these days.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: “Why haven’t you done any hair and makeup for photo shoots?” “Well, ‘cause nobody’s hired me.” So you’re waiting for somebody to give you—

Eden: Right, right.

Winn: —permission. You’re waiting for somebody else to come along and say, “Here, I’ll pay you money so that you can do what you love to do.”

Seth: Yeah. Well, and that’s the thing, is like, you know, I think you said this. I was watching you speak in Las Vegas at Beacon and I totally ripped this off, by the way, and say it all the time now. But it’s like, you know, you say, like, “Quit waiting for the phone to ring.” Like, the phone doesn’t ring. Nobody, like, — and I’ve started saying this, I’m like, “Nobody invited me to start the world-leading youth water activism organization. I just did it because it needed to be done.”

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: Okay, so let's talk a little bit about—

Seth: Winn Claybaugh said that.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: I said that.

Eden: Winn Claybaugh

Winn: I got credit now. Oh I'll steal your material so when you say it, they'll say, "Seth stole that from Winn."

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: That's all—no. I heard it once said that if you steal from more than one source it's called research.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: So I do a ton of research. *[laughs]*

Seth: Picasso said, "Good artists borrow and great artists steal." So there you go.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: There you go. That's perfect. So let's talk about the water crisis and then we'll get into what The Thirst Project does. So how many people on this planet go without clean water, and what does that translate into?

Seth: Seven hundred and sixty million. Seven hundred and sixty *million* people today—almost a billion people—don't have access to safe, clean drinking water. And it's not just a big number. I mean, what that actually means is that every day women and children, sons and daughters and mothers walk for miles to fetch water from whatever standing water is available in those nearest communities.

Winn: So, it's not like they're going to fetch clean, safe water.

Seth: No.

Winn: They're just fetching water and oftentimes it's not clean or safe.

Seth: Almost always it's not clean or safe.

Winn: Okay.

Seth: We're talking about water from rivers, streams, swamps, mud puddles, earth dams: whatever standing water is nearest and available to those communities. And as a result of drinking that water, people contract easily preventable water-borne diseases. Things like diarrhea, dysentery, cholera kill more kids under the age of five every day than AIDS, malaria, and all world violence combined, including war. It's literally 4,100 kids a day, every 21 seconds. It's the equivalent of a jumbo jet crashing every hour and a half of every day on end, nonstop. It's—

Winn: That's how many?

Seth: How many children under the age of five—

Winn: Die.

Seth: —die every day.

Winn: Every day. Wow.

Seth: From water-borne diseases. So—and it's not just getting sick and dying from water-borne diseases. It means that because of the thousands of hours lost every day just hauling water, it means that women can't get jobs and contribute financially to their households. It means that children can't go to school and get an education because of the thousands of hours every year wasted just hauling water. So it impacts every sector of life and human community development.

Winn: Eden, how'd you get connected to this?

Eden: Right. I'm right now just like—I cannot, do not understand and it just makes me angry and upset that this actually goes on. And where are the people or the gods or something to call upon to make this stop?

Winn: Well, two are sitting right here. *[laughs]*

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: Eden and Seth.

Eden: Three. I mean, it just doesn't make sense to me, at all. I got involved—a girlfriend of mine, Robbie Brenner, is part of the board of Thirst Project.

Seth: Mm-hm.

Eden: Sponsor. And they were honoring her and she invited me to the gala and I was just so taken back and I left that night thinking, *Okay, how? I need to be a part of this.* And then that turned into the State of the Union dinner, which turned into Seth and I at a table, which turned into many things, which turned into now.

Winn: We're sitting in Eden's house right now and there's these flip-chart papers—

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: —taped to her dining room—

Eden: That's my whiteboard. *[laughs]*

Winn: —wall here and every famous mover and shaker in the—

Eden: Beauty industry.

Winn: —beauty industry's name is up here, so just trust me, she's after you.

Seth: She's coming.

Eden: Yeah. I'm coming.

Winn: Yeah, she's coming and everybody's—now I'm looking at the names that you have up here. You want the best of the best because—

Eden: Because I sat back, Winn, and I said, you know—I looked—I was doing research and, obviously, you were at my top, to be honest, and then Sassoon because it's close to home. I hate to say it like that but, you know, when it comes time to give, sometimes—actually this is their first time. And I did research and Dad was doing Habitat for Humanity and building homes because he didn't have a home after Hurricane Katrina. Growing up he was in an orphanage, and it was part of carrying on his legacy. And part of me opening EDEN by Eden Sassoon was building a foundation. Now that foundation in this industry is carrying his legacy. So for me to get involved is saying, "You know what? This is an industry where Dad said that if we can unite the industry, to me, without ego, we can create miracles." And I am going to make that happen. *[laughs]* I'm 41 now. I don't care if I'm 81 or 85 or if it takes my last breath. But it's been, even in six months—

Seth: Yeah.

Eden: —eight months, it's a strong start and it's because the passion is there. It comes from a place of, "Look, there is a problem. We need to know." Our industry wastes water daily. We wash hair. Our products are made of water. This is something that has to be dealt with.

Winn: Which we take for granted. We turn on the faucet and there it is.

Eden: One hundred percent. It's about beauty. It's about, you know—and I get it. Beauty, vanity, we want to go out of the house. We have things to do. But you know what? Enough. Let's be vain and let's make a change.

Winn: Right.

Eden: At the same time. So this whiteboard behind me, yeah, I'm coming strong.
[laughs]

Winn: *[laughs]*

Seth: I just have to say, like as—just to walk into your friend's house though—we're sitting here at her dining room table and I'm just like, "What?" Like, when she says whiteboard, she's literally taped, like—

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: —large, large butcher block pieces of paper to her wall that are covered. And I was like—I walked in and I was like, "Oh maybe this is like a cute family, like, art project or something meaningful with their kids."

Eden: Yeah, you're right. It is. *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]*

Seth: And I was like, "Winn, what is she . . .?" He's like, "This is her Thirst Project, like, hit list." And I was like—

Winn: *[laughs]* Her hit list.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: Like my friend has, like, taken over her wall. It's crazy. It's moving.

Eden: And Winn knows that's the best of the best up there.

Winn: That's what we do. So Seth, what was your, then, connection. Oh, by the way, I don't want to skip over this 'cause you mentioned that your father was in an orphanage and some people just said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, what did she just say?" Your father was an orphan.

Eden: Grandma had to—couldn't support the kids. He had a brother. And so during the war she had to put them in an orphanage, and from the age of five to eleven, he was in an orphanage. He got to see his mom once a month. And interestingly enough, he did a TED talk and his—I found this—he said, "They would say, 'Where's Vidal?'" And he'd say, "And they'd find me in the bath because water was my place where I found freedom."

Winn: Mm.

Eden: And that was it for him. And every time we traveled, we'd go times to Capri, he'd jump off that boat and into that ocean and he was gone. I mean, just—he was a swimmer, it was—water was his thing. You'd put it—he said, "If I could come back as an animal"—animal, a mammal—that he would be a dolphin. And so for me to be a part of this is kind of like all the stars are aligning.

Winn: Right.

Eden: Yeah, Dad was raised in an orphanage.

Winn: So Seth, how did you get turned on to become educated, fascinated, active with that there's a huge crisis here.

Seth: It was as if like all the stars aligned. I mean, it started with a friend of mine who was a photo journalist who lived for over a year in six-week blocks at a time in different villages in Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central America, just really exploring and then documenting and reporting on the UN's Millennial Development Goal progress in those areas. And then she came back and we got to catch up over coffee, sat down, and she began showing me just some of the most stunning and amazing photos of three- and four- and five-year-olds on the side of the road drinking water out of mud puddles, rivers, swamps. And it wasn't just like, "Oh, look at this sad kid." But it was, "No, like, this is Sophie. She's seven. We hung out for six weeks. We played Barbies." Like, "I watched her die of cholera." Insane stories that just totally shattered my worldview. And then just every, I mean, over the next 72 hours I, like, went to this exhibit over at the CAA building that was an installation about the water crisis, and then I went to church and the pastor started talking about the water crisis, and I met this hydrologist who told me I could build wells, and, like, I went to this film. It was just like all these crazy things and so it was sort of one of those—

Eden: Mm-hm.

Seth: —to your point about God moments, and so I was just like, "Okay."

Eden: Yep.

Seth: Like, "I get it." Like, "We have to do something."

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: And I do want to circle back to something you said earlier because I just, I think this is important for people to understand. You know, it's easy to look at all of the hurt or the pain or the suffering in the world and sort of throw off responsibility and say, "Well, if there was a loving God . . ." or, you know,

“What’s God’s plan for that?” Like, “How is that love? What’s his plan for that?” And I’m like, to your point, it’s us.

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: Like that’s the plan. And there is no plan B, by the way. Like, it’s us.

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: So we have to take action.

Winn: And how often do people say, “Oh, I couldn’t make a difference. That is a horrible crisis and *someone* should do something about that.”

Seth: Mm. Yeah.

Eden: All the time.

Winn: Yeah.

Seth: Mm-hm.

Winn: “But not me. Couldn’t be me.”

Seth: Mm-hm.

Winn: “I don’t have millions of dollars.”

Seth: Mm-hm.

Winn: What do you say to that person?

Seth: Well, I think that it’s easy to get intimidated about the scope of it and say, “Well, that project is huge. That issue is huge. How can I ever help?” There’s 760 million people, a billion people. Like, “What can I really do?” And I think that it’s important to know, like, it’s not any one person’s responsibility to solely end this crisis. But it’s all of our responsibility. And then knowing that, it removes that sort of huge burden of like, “Well man, like, how do I inject myself into it.” Twenty-five dollars once gives one person clean water for life. Not \$25 once a month. Not \$25 once a year.

Winn: Okay, say that again.

Seth: Twenty-five dollars *once* gives one person clean water for *life*. Not once a month, not once a year.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: Once. So when you break it down into bite-size terms that literally anyone can do—

Eden: See, and he makes it sound like that, and you know what I say? “Do you have a dollar?”

Winn: Right.

Eden: “Yes.”

Seth: Yep.

Eden: “Thank you.” I’ll take the dollar.

Seth: Yeah.

Eden: “Do you have Instagram?” “Yeah, of course.” “Do you have Facebook?” “Yes.” Like, “Okay, so here, let’s get on it. I’m going to show you exactly what to do, how to do it and how to raise awareness.”

Winn: But you were just showing me some kid. I say he’s a kid, he’s 22.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Eden: Oh, please.

Seth: We have—

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: That you just showed us today.

Seth: Yeah.

Eden: He’s raised—

Seth: We have a friend—his name’s Connor Franta, he’s a good friend.

Winn: Connor?

Seth: Connor Franta.

Winn: Okay.

Seth: He—if you’re listening and know who he is—

Eden: Incredible.

Seth: His fans are amazing and a little rabid in the best way possible. But he's a YouTuber. He makes his living making content videos for YouTube and he's incredibly talented and funny and smart. And so he has amassed this amazing audience of people who, you know, look forward to him when he releases his content. And so for his 22nd birthday, exactly 30 days ago, he said, "I want all my friends and family and fans to—you know, I don't need anything, I have everything I need. I want you to give my age in dollars to help raise money for The Thirst Project." His original goal was to raise ten wells in Swaziland, so \$120,000. He beat that in five days.

Eden: Oh my God.

Seth: And it was a 30-day campaign. So the campaign ends today, actually, and they've raised, as of today, \$219,000.

Winn: Wow.

Eden: Amazing.

Seth: It's crazy. It's crazy.

Winn: Just accessing his circle.

Seth: His audience.

Winn: His audience. You know, if your audience is ten people or, you know, ten million people.

Eden: Yep.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: You know, I always say if you have 50 Facebook friends, well, that's your audience.

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: Mm-hm.

Winn: That's your circle right there. How are you using your power?

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: Are you running a Jerry Springer show on your little Facebook page, spewing out poison?

Eden: Exactly. Yep.

Winn: And, “Oh that idiot at work, what she did to me,” and using your power to make people miserable. Or are you using it to make a difference? And here’s somebody who’s using his power.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: You know?

Seth: Absolutely.

Eden: Exactly.

Winn: So maybe Oprah’s audience is a little larger than yours but you still have an audience, so what are you doing with that?

Seth: Absolutely. I mean, we see kids—

Eden: We’re getting to Oprah, are you kidding?

Winn: Of course you are.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: I don’t see her. We need to write her up on your board up here, sweetheart.

Eden: She gets her own page.

Winn: Okay, so you get motivated. You get angry or you get something. What did you get? What did you feel?

Seth: I don’t usually get angry very often.

Eden: I love you, Seth.

Seth: I get sad more than—and so I just—my heart hurt and I was also a little bit embarrassed, I guess. Embarrassed that I, at that point in my life—I was 19 and I was like, man I thought I was, you know, a well-educated, you know, fairly intelligent 19-year-old, went to great schools and I was like, man, like how is it possible that I didn’t know this was even an issue? I had no idea, didn’t know.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: And so I was a bit embarrassed and also just sad, like my heart just hurt. And I’m a highly, like, empathetic person and so I just went to class the next day and I was like, “Guys,” like, “We’ve got to do—like you have no idea what’s going on in the world. We have to do something.” And so our quote-unquote brilliant idea was—we were like, “Well, we’ll just start a little group of people here on campus to raise awareness.” A little club basically. And we started

doing events around school and we started doing events in the Hollywood area here in L.A. And shortly after that a few other schools that we had friends at said, “Hey, would you guys come” —you know, they saw what we were doing, thought it was kind of cool—said, “Hey, would you guys come to our school and basically tell our friends, you know, what you’re doing? We want to see if we can do something similar.” So we went and spoke at two schools and—

Winn: Was that originally to raise money or to raise awareness?

Seth: We really—

Winn: Like did you know you were going to build wells? Or you just wanted to raise the awareness at that point? Or you didn’t—

Seth: As embarrassing as it is, we didn’t even know. We were just like, “We’re just going to go tell people.”

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: I mean, I guess it was mostly to raise awareness but we really didn’t—there was no plan.

Winn: See, I have a philosophy called *Ready, FIRE, aim*.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: A lot of people though are like, *Ready, aim, aim*—

Seth: Right.

Winn: —*aim*, and they never fire. They never do anything.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: You’re already fired and now we’ve got to do something about this. Now we’ve got to aim and figure out what the heck we’re doing.

Seth: Well, I think the plan to the idea was like, “Well, great, we’ll go tell these people and they’ll go do something about it.”

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: *[laughs]* And so we went and, you know, spoke at these schools, kind of forgot about it until about a month later. They called us back, both schools, and they were like, “Hey, we did fundraisers,” and then checks showed up in the mail for \$12,000.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: And at this point, just to give you context, there was no Thirst Project. Like we were calling our club The Thirst Project so that's what the check said. But, like, there was no organization, there was no bank account, there was—

Eden: Wow.

Seth: —no 501(c)(3). We were, like, “We can't even deposit this.” Like, whoa, like—

Winn: Right.

Seth: But we realized, man, this is what two schools could do.

Winn: Right.

Seth: What if there were ten schools doing this. What if there were a hundred schools doing this, a thousand schools. And we realized that while we're definitely not the largest water organization in the world or the oldest, there was no one at that point activating students, young people around this issue. And—

Winn: Mostly high school and college campuses?

Seth: Primarily, yeah.

Winn: Okay.

Seth: And so today we are, without question, the world's leading youth water activist organization.

Winn: How many youth are involved? How many kids are—?

Seth: Over 300,000 students.

Winn: On how many campuses?

Seth: Three hundred-nineteen.

Winn: And you've raised how much money?

Seth: Over \$8 million by students in six years.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: A hundred percent of which has gone to build water projects in 12 countries.

Winn: How is it that a hundred percent has gone to build wells because, you know, “Give me a dollar, but only 75 percent is gonna go to the actual cause ‘cause we have overhead.” Which I understand. So—

Seth: Sure.

Winn: —how is it that you guys are not able to have overhead?

Seth: Well, I mean—

Winn: Well, you have overhead—

Seth: Yes.

Winn: —but it’s not pulled from the—

Seth: Public.

Winn: —the donations, public donations. Okay.

Seth: So the important word there would be like, “public” or “student gifts,” right? So anytime anybody—whether you’re listening right now and you go online and give or someone sends in a random check or a student gives or a church gives—anytime the public donor gives to fund projects, we commit to that student or school or donor that a hundred percent of their funds will go to fund water projects on the ground. And the way we can do that is because we have a private group of donors led by our board. So, like the friend who introduced Eden to the cause. We have an amazing, incredible, generous group of people who sit on our board who give very large amounts of money knowing that all of their money will pay for the stuff that nobody really wants to pay for but that’s critical to operate—

Winn: Right.

Seth: —like office space and travel to go speak at schools—

Winn: Right.

Seth: —and Post-its and salaries and the ability to run, you know, websites. So that we can then tell students especially, but also any public donor, that because of that amazing, generous, small group of people, a hundred percent of public gifts go to funding water projects on the ground.

Winn: That’s incredible. That’s incredible. By the way, I was watching another video that somebody did about you. You have a gala and you have celebrities there, and one of the celebrities was saying that her favorite real estate on the planet are the wells that she built and that she builds a well every year or something.

Seth: Paula, yeah.

Winn: Yeah.

Seth: She's amazing. She sits on our board. She's incredible. So yeah, we have a number of different friends outside of the school space in the entertainment community who, I mean, we are just super fortunate and blessed. You know, Jennifer Garner hosted our gala this year and was super gracious and generous and amazing and Pauley Perrette from *NCIS* and, you know—

Winn: Love her.

Seth: —the cast of MTV's *Teen Wolf* and friends like Chyler Leigh from *Grey's Anatomy* and, you know, just a number of people who—the *Twilight* cast, who all have lent their voice to help raise awareness of this issue and rally and activate their audience and their communities to get involved and give.

Winn: Now you've built wells. Is that it? Built wells or dug wells, what's the proper terminology.

Seth: So, I mean, you could say built or drill.

Eden: Good question.

Winn: Drill, okay.

Seth: But we don't really dig, typically. So we'll go in to local communities and hire local contractors, local for-profit, independent drilling companies with huge rigs that are able to drill three, four, five hundred feet deep, tapping into already existing water tables and building freshwater wells to draw up safe, protected water for people.

Winn: Okay. And you've done that in 12 countries but you're, at this point, focused primarily on Swaziland.

Seth: Yeah, so—

Winn: Why is that?

Seth: So it's not—wells are obviously—they are our primary source of, or rather our preferred method of implementing. There are a few other situations where, depending on the individual community, it makes more sense to do spring protection or rainwater catchment or biosand filters. But typically we will do water wells; hand-pump borehole water wells is the most sustainable method and so—

Winn: You all caught that, that this kid knows what he's talking about.

Eden: *[laughs]* What?

Winn: Like you've educated yourself. You know, you understand where to get clean water. You know how to—about drilling. You've been there firsthand.

Eden: Wow.

Seth: Oh yeah.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: That was quite the little education that you had to put yourself through to understand what you were talking about.

Seth: Yeah. Well, I mean, thankfully—

Winn: 'Cause I'm really good at raising money but then people start saying, you know, "Well, tell me about that." I'm like, "Well, I don't really have those details but give me money anyway."

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: 'Cause I'm gonna give it to somebody who knows. *[laughs]*

Eden: Right.

Seth: We have an amazing group, much like our actual board, we have a group called our Water Project Technical Board, which is made up of three civil engineers and four hydrologists who are experts in their fields; PhDs who, some of which work for green, for-profit civil engineering firms here in the States, some of which have their own civil engineering companies. But basically we ask that they actually don't give money to us because we want them to be unbiased, and we don't pay them. They are a volunteer, self-imposed, internal watchdog agency who meet once a quarter and they are the ones who created our Standards for Sustainability and they're the ones who meet every quarter to review our proposed methods for how we build projects in the field, approve or deny them, and make sure that we are building with the communities we work with the most sustainable project possible.

Winn: You're mentioning sustainability. Talk about that because that was actually—somebody brought that up to me, "Well, cool, Winn, they're going in to drill these wells and then they're out of there and these wells break down, everything breaks down."

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: Then what?

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: So talk to us about sustainability.

Seth: Yeah, I mean, it's interesting because there's a ton of support in the international community right now for water, which is great to see so many people aware of the issue and becoming aware and taking action. The least sexy stat in our space, as people who work in the water charity world, is that over 64 percent of all water projects implemented by foreign nonprofits or charities or NGOs—just on the continent of Africa alone, not counting Southeast Asia, South and Central America—64 percent plus fail in the first year. Now, 99 percent of all of those quote or said failures are a direct result of people just not engaging either (a) the community in the process to be trained on how to maintain and repair those wells after the community's NGO or charity is gone or, (b) not doing some basic, very important, sometimes a little more costly but supercritical steps before and after building the project. So it's not often that people are just, you know, building bad projects or that they are, you know, mis-intentioned. They actually have really great hearts and the goal a lot of times is to build as many wells as fast as possible. But if people don't engage communities in the process to train them on how to maintain or repair those wells, set up operations and maintenance funds so that when a hand pump needs replaced or a gravel pack or sanitary seal needs fixed, the community knows how to do it themselves and has their own fund to decide to do so, those things aren't repaired.

Winn: So when you pull out, so to speak, the community is still involved.

Seth: Yeah, the community has to. From—

Winn: They have to.

Seth: —day one it's not just a conversation where we go, "Hey, here's who we are. Here's what we do. We're gonna go give you this." It's—we work with the community, which is supercritical because it engenders a much stronger sense of dignity in how we—

Winn: *Very* critical.

Eden: Mm-hm.

Seth: It's a much more dignified way to work with that community.

Winn: Right.

Seth: And they have to contribute sweat equity to the project. The community has to—let's say that the hydrology survey we do on the front end reveals that this specific spot in the community is the best place to drill. There's a great water table and formation there, but there's tons of brush and trees around it. It's

the community's job to fell those trees, clear that brush, because we want to create a sense of ownership over that project. They have to create a water committee made of five women, five men, which immediately engenders a higher sense of social status for women in the community. And they're responsible then for regulating water use to make sure everyone has equal and adequate usage to the source, making sure everyone contributes to their operations and maintenance fund, and that they're trained on how to make those repairs.

Winn: Wow. You know, Habitat for Humanity is so good at that.

Seth: Mm.

Winn: They go into the community and they engage the community before they'll do any work.

Seth: Mm-hm.

Winn: Which is so, so important for that sustainability.

Seth: It's critical.

Winn: And that sense of pride too, the sense of ownership. You know, people support what they help to create.

Seth: Absolutely.

Winn: If they're not involved, they're not committed.

Seth: Yeah.

Eden: And they support one another so it brings them together.

Winn: Yeah.

Seth: Well, and it's—at that point, I mean, it's starts to feel if we did it the other way, just like it's not even really the community's project, the mentality—

Eden: Yeah.

Seth: —of the people, "That's your project and you'll come back and fix it." But it's not my project, it's your project.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: Talk to us about how you created some awareness here and then we're gonna talk about how people can get involved here. Some of the projects that you've done, and that you've engaged other people to do, like I saw a video

where people are carrying around a dirty bottle of water. Can you talk about that?

Seth: Yeah, so every month—well, to back up—the first sort of experience for most of our students is a school tour. So we have speakers travel across the U.S. speaking at middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities to educate students about the water crisis. And then we challenge those students to take action. And so we then have students start chapters or clubs to fundraise and raise awareness. And then to help them do that, every month we have a different campaign with a different activity or action students can do to either raise awareness or funds. So we help create those tools that students—

Winn: Which is important ‘cause sometimes you say, “Now go do something.” People are like, “I’m motivated but what do I do?” *[laughs]*

Seth: Right, absolutely.

Winn: Right.

Seth: And so those tools exist to help them do that. And so it’s things like you said, we have a campaign we call the “Dirty Little Secret Campaign.”

Winn: “The Dirty Little Secret.”

Seth: Yes.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: And we basically posture—

Winn: The dirty little secret is 4,000 kids are dying every day.

Seth: Yeah. I mean we posture that the world’s biggest dirty little secret is the fact that there are almost a billion people without clean water and then we’re like, “How is that not a part of every daily conversation ever?” And so we—

Winn: Like what you said, if a jumbo jet went down it would be the headline of every news broadcast.

Seth: Ever.

Winn: Uh-huh.

Seth: But this yet has not a single minute of CNN’s airtime nightly. And so basically we ask students to carry around a bottle of dirty water with them everywhere they go for the entire month. So literally your desk at school, the gym, the dinner table, so people see it and go, “What the heck are you doing? Why do you have this nasty bottle of water?” And they can say naturally then, “Did

you know?” Like, “Did you know that this is happening?” and prompt those awareness conversations. So some of them are fundraisers, some of them are awareness campaigns. We typically alternate every other month so we don’t give our students like fundraising fatigue. But they can do all of them.

Winn: Fundraising fatigue.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Seth: They can do—

Winn: I’m so good at that.

Seth: *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* I put people through fundraising fatigue, so.

Eden: You’re good at that, but thank you.

Seth: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, so it’s amazing but they’re, you know, they’re always meant to be very creative and fun. We call on all of our celebrity supporters or influencers to help activate their audience and explain to students how they can do it. And so we’re releasing a new campaign every single month. And it all ultimately supports our end goal, which I didn’t really talk about when you asked me about it, but the campaign for Swaziland. And so—

Winn: Oh yes.

Seth: So basically two years ago we completed a two-year feasibility study.

Winn: Now, why’d you choose Swaziland?

Seth: Swaziland, unfortunately, is best known for having the single highest density HIV/AIDS population of any country in the world. So you’re looking at about 26 percent of the entire population, which is crazy. And specifically the age group that I find myself in and most of our students, you know, 18 to 30, you’re looking at upwards of 50 percent.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: One of every two people. And what is tragic is most people don’t talk about the relationship between water and HIV and AIDS, because it’s huge. If people live in rural villages or communities and drink from contaminated water sources, even if they have access to great medical treatment or antiretrovirals or AIDS clinics from other organizations but still drink that dirty water, people’s immune systems are already so compromised that the diseases in the water they drink will actually kill them faster than their AIDS will.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: So we chose Swaziland because it's tiny; we can make a huge impact. There are about 1.4 million people and you're looking at, you know, a couple hundred thousand, about 800,000 don't have safe water. And while that's a huge number, about \$50 million would give the entire country safe water. And so we basically figured out it would cost us about, like I said, \$50 million and we estimated we could do it in the course of ten years.

Winn: Okay.

Seth: So we committed to do what no one has ever done before and give an entire country safe water and impact these two issues at once and hopefully change the face of a nation.

Winn: Wow. What's the cost of a well?

Seth: In Swaziland it's about \$12,000.

Winn: \$12,000. Okay.

Seth: Which gives an entire village—a whole community of people safe, clean water.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: It's not just Swaziland for the sake of Swaziland. It's Swaziland so we can then take that as an amazing case study when we're finished to the UN, the current administration, other water organizations, and say, "If we can do this here, why can't we do it everywhere?"

Winn: Yeah.

Seth: And so that's really what we're aggressively moving towards.

Winn: Seth, are people surprised that—

Eden: Yes. *[laughs]*

Winn: —that at your young age, that you're taking on such a serious world crisis?

Seth: I don't always feel that young anymore but I think the thing is, you know, whether it's me or whether it's the students we work with, I love shaking people up. I don't try to be offensive in any way but I try to, like, shock people in the best way possible because, like, this issue should be shocking. Like, it should be offensive. Like, it's offensive that we live in a world—

Eden: Yes.

Seth: —where this is allowed to happen and so I think the thing is—harkening back to kind of what we said at the beginning, the expectations that people have on, you know, young people sort of going through that motion, that cycle of school and job and buying stuff, when they see people, particularly young people, breaking outside of that, they don't know how to respond.

Winn: Right.

Seth: Like they don't know what to say. And so I think that it's a huge advantage, actually. You know, a lot of times students will say, like, "Well, I want to reach out to, like, this local business" or, you know, "I want to get involved and ask these people for help but I'm afraid, like, they won't take me seriously or I don't know what to do." And I'm like, "Look, you need to understand. The thing that you're worried about will be, like, your biggest hindrance will absolutely be your greatest asset. The fact that you're young will absolutely—because, like, if you go in and you're articulate and you're intelligent and you are passionate and you know what you're going to do and what you're asking support for, they can't help but jump on board because they don't know how to respond when they see it. And it's not what they expect." And so it's amazing, again, when we just release these students who are already intelligent and passionate and give them tools to be articulate about it and give them a plan. Like, yeah, people are surprised. They don't know what to say and so the best part is, we say, "Well, then say yes and give us your money." *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]*

Seth: And it's like, you know? And so it's amazing.

Winn: Huh. Now you have been onsite how many times? How many trips have you taken?

Seth: I'm up to 29 trips just to the continent of Africa, different amounts to each of the countries we're active in. And then I've only been to our Central American projects a couple times, like five, six times. India once. But yeah.

Winn: And Eden, you're on your way?

Eden: I think I'm going November 5th.

Winn: Wow.

Seth: Like three weeks.

Winn: For three weeks.

Eden: No.

Seth: No.

Winn: How long will you be there?

Eden: We're going— *[laughs]*

Seth: I meant in three weeks, sorry.

Eden: I mean, I would go for three weeks but in three weeks for—I think we're going for—

Seth: About a week.

Eden: Yeah. It's a quick one and I'm, you know, I'm not nervous—

Winn: So you're checking into the Four Seasons hotel there in Swaziland.

Eden: Yeah, I said, "So what's, you know, the cost a night?" He's like, "Oh, it's about \$75." I'm like, "Seth, where are we staying?" Not that I can't, you know, camp out with the best of us but, like, he's, "Oh, you're going to love it. You're going to love it." I'm like, "You know what? I'm gonna love it all. Period. End of story."

Winn: Why is it important for you to go?

Eden: You want to know why it's important? It's important because it's so in my soul, in my gut. I keep talking about it. I'm asking for dollars. I'm asking for attention. I'm asking for time. I need to go and show up. I lead by example, period, end of story. And that's why it's important for me to go.

Winn: Good for you. So money can fix this.

Seth: Mm.

Eden: Money, time, energy.

Winn: 'Cause there's some things that money cannot fix.

Seth: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Winn: Money can fix this.

Seth: I mean, it's just a numbers game at this point, really. It's—we know how to end this crisis.

Eden: Can I say something that's—

Winn: Absolutely.

Eden: —kind of aggressive, maybe? You know, as in this sort of uniting the beauty industry and where I want to take this, the beauty industry makes a lot of money.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Eden: A lot. And I'm asking, you know, clients, hairdressers who make money, to give dollars, to give this. You know, and there's going to come a time where I want to go after companies who make millions of dollars to say, "Match the money that we've earned." You know? Or what if I didn't have to ask and a company said, "I want to be involved. I want to sponsor you. Here, let me—because I have a budget and I have to give it somewhere—let me be involved in what you're doing." That is like, "Wow," I didn't even have to come and say, "Can I? May I? Please?"

Winn: Guess what? You're still gonna have to. *[laughs]* Which is okay.

Eden: *[laughs]*

Winn: Which is just fine.

Eden: Well, you know what? Look it, see this board? I'm coming after you.

Winn: Yeah. So what do you say to people who—because this will come up: "Well, cool that they're raising money but it's leaving the U.S. How about if we keep money here in the U.S.?" How do you respond to that?

Seth: So, I mean, it's—I would say this with every ounce of love in my heart and I fully believe, man, if your heart is in, you know, the foster care system in the United States or it's in, you know, combatting homelessness in the United States or any number of, you know, education initiatives, then absolutely—like, I would never want to take people away from the things they care about. But the reality is, an intelligent case cannot be made that the water crisis that we're addressing in developing communities—and it's not just, you know, Africa. It's Southeast Asia. It's South and Central America. It's developing communities. There is not a single child in the U.S. who has to die from diarrhea or dysentery or cholera. No mother worries in the United States, whether you're living on a Native American reserve where there is extreme poverty but it's not anywhere near what we're dealing with; whether it's in Appalachia; ever our homeless in the U.S. have access to toilets and sinks. So no mother worries about having to bury their child from cholera. And so I believe, because of, you know, (a) I'm highly analytical and so I want to know where I can make the greatest impact with the resources I have and because water impacts everything in life, and because it has the highest return on investment for any charity dollar you give—it dramatically decreases disease rates by upwards of 88 percent overnight, child mortality rates by 90 percent overnight—I would say, you know, I by no means want to quote take money away from the United States but this is not an issue of, "Well, is it the

Americans' responsibility to, you know, provide water to everyone in the world?" It's a human issue. If we really believe, as the UN declared in 2010, that water is a human right, then it doesn't matter whether you're in America or Britain or any developed country, it is your responsibility as a human—not as an American, as a human—to ensure that every other human has these basic needs met. I don't believe it's Americans' jobs to provide, you know, for certain levels of lifestyle for everyone, but basic human rights, absolutely.

Winn: I knew he'd have an answer.

Eden: Amen. *[laughs]*

Winn: *[laughs]* So believe it or not, I can't believe we have to start to wrap this up.

Eden: Ohhh.

Winn: Dang. When you were—also from your TED speech, you said something along the lines of a million dollars does not make you more generous. Talk to us about that. Share with us your thoughts on that.

Seth: Well, again, sort of like we talked about at the beginning, I think people think, *If I only had this, or If I was only at this place, then I would take action or then I would help or then I could help.* And so the idea that you somehow become a generous person when you have a million dollars or you somehow become courageous when you have a black belt in karate is just flawed because there are a lot of people who are millionaires—many times millionaires—who give less than people in the middle class in America. And so you don't suddenly become generous when your bank account has a certain number of zeroes behind it. Generosity is a choice. It's something you choose to practice today wherever you're at. You know, giving—the seven-year-old who comes up to us at a church or at a school after we've spoken and gives 50 cents is often a million times more generous than the millionaire who comes up and gives \$50.

Winn: Right.

Seth: And so I would say it's a choice. You know, you don't become more courageous—you're maybe more equipped, you're better equipped to take action when you have those resources, but those are just resources. Those aren't markers of your character.

Winn: You've heard of Generation G?

Seth: Mm.

Winn: It's not defined by when you were born, the G stands for generosity.

Seth: Mm.

Eden: Mm.

Winn: You can be seven years old, you could be 80 years old.

Seth: Yeah.

Winn: And be a member of Generation G.

Seth: Yep.

Winn: And, I mean, I could ramble on and on and on why it's just a good business idea—

Eden: Love that.

Winn: —it's just good for business because people want to know that whoever they're spending money with, whether it's a hair salon, whether it's a pizza joint, whether it's a lawyer, they want to know that, "Are you just as concerned with putting money back out into the community for good causes as you are with putting money into your own pocket?" And actually, nowadays, I want to know that you're more concerned with putting money into good causes than you are putting it into your own pocket. And you said it, we're very blessed. We're blessed in this country, we take a lot of things for granted, and we have the opportunity to make a huge, huge difference here.

Eden: Huge.

Seth: Well, and I think, you know—quickly, I know we are out of time, but to your point earlier about this is something we can solve and I feel like there is a lot of understandably, you know, people who are jaded about the millions and billions of dollars that do get poured into, you know, developing issues but this particular issue is something we have seen amazing impact, just in the last six years. We are only a six-year-old organization and in six years since we started we used to have to say that 1.1 billion people didn't have clean water. Today, six years later, that number is 760 million. Those couple of .1s are upwards of 300 million people who have gained access to clean water in six years.

Winn: Whoa.

Seth: And the global population has grown. We will absolutely see the end of this in our lifetime. We will be the generations—all of us alive today—who push the water crisis into the history books.

Winn: Whoa, whoa. Eden, do you have a final message for our listeners? A final challenge?

Eden: My challenge is to wake up daily and really ask yourself, “What can I do today to make a difference?” Whether it be within yourself, for someone else: “How can I be better today?” Period. And also, you know, share. Share who you are, share yourself with others, share your journey, share your experience, because it will and it can make an impact—a big one—on other people. And then that will pay itself forward.

Winn: I hope people take the time or get the opportunity to get to know you ‘cause they’re gonna be happy. They are going to be happy that, “Wow, Vidal’s legacy is living on.” You know, you’re using the name and you’re using your heart and your passion to make a difference. So, congratulations sweetheart.

Eden: Thank you.

Winn: ‘Cause we all loved your dad.

Eden: Yeah.

Winn: Seth, do you have a final message for our listeners?

Seth: I, you know, I don’t want to, like, be all Kumbaya or anything but I think—

Winn: Oh, do it, do it. *[laughs]*

Eden: Yeah, I was going to say—. *[laughs]* Sing it! Do.

Seth: Like I said earlier, you know, if this in any way touches your heart, if you sat there and like, “Man, I want to do something. I want to be involved.” I know it sounds really like touchy-feely but, like, the last six years the incredible family—and I choose that word intentionally. I mean, yeah, I could call it an army, we’ve got an amazing army of hundreds of thousands of young people and old people, like, who have given insanely generously of their time, their hearts, the talent, their resources to make what we do possible but I don’t know a better group of people on the planet to get to do life with. And so join us. Come be a part of this. I would ask your help. If it’s in any way touched, moved, or inspired you, like, we want to do life with you and we want to work with you to build the world that we all want to live in, the world that works for everybody.

Winn: So tell us, how do people find The Thirst Project? How do they get involved?

Seth: Thirstproject.org and you can get involved there. You can, you know, donate right on the home page. You can sign up for our, you know, updates and e-blasts. Facebook.com/ThirstProject, Instagram or Twitter is @ThirstProject. Yeah, reach out. We would love—if you want to email us and get connected, if you have questions about, you know, “How does this work? How do wells get built? How do I bring you to my kid’s school or my school?” Email us at info@thirstproject.org and thank you so much.

Eden: There is one thing that Dad always said that he was grateful for: that he was able to be the poetry of change.

Seth: Mm.

Eden: It's in his journal and I have that journal and I always say to myself, "Wow, to be the poetry of change."

Winn: Wow. I can think of no better way to end this than on that thought. Thank you, Seth. Thank you, Eden.

Eden: Thank you.

Seth: Thank you, Winn.

Winn: Perfect.