



Matthew Vargas

“Working at Starbucks helped me become the best version of myself,”



By: Starbucks alum Alex Pentland

Spotlight Date: 05/02/2022

Pronouns: He, him, his

Tenure: 7 years, 2011-2018

Significant roles at Starbucks: barista, trainer, signage artist, Big Bend Road & US 301, Riverview, Florida.

SCAP: 2016-2018, Major: Interdisciplinary Studies, BIS Degree, specializing in Sociology, Sales, and Marketing

About

For Matthew, everything is connected. While working as a Starbucks barista in Florida, Matthew leveraged his art skills by doing all the signage art in his store, was encouraged to further his art education by his store manager, got his first professional gig through a loyal customer, and then ended up doing an art mural at the Starbucks across from his college.



What did you want to be when you grew up?

My dad was in the Airforce, and he'd bring back currency from all over the world, Korea, Egypt, Central America, etc. I was fascinated by all the colors, graphics, and illustrations. I wanted to be a bank note designer. And then I saw Titanic and fell in love with how Jack Dawson sketched, connecting the past with the present. I knew I wanted to be an artist.

What are you doing now?

I am a Graphic Designer at 160over90, a creative agency in Atlanta, GA. My team and I design graphic assets and branding activations for various clients from AT&T, Capital One, DirectTV, etc. I've been here since August 2021, and I have had the privilege of seeing my work come to life at the New York City Wine and Food Festival. Getting to see the impact my work has made in empowering brand connections has been astounding.



What's your advice to new Starbucks alum?

Remember all the lessons you learned at Starbucks and bring those skills into what you're doing now
Follow your passion, learn your new business from the inside out, and above all, be a decent human being.

Which Starbucks alum had the biggest impact on your career / life?

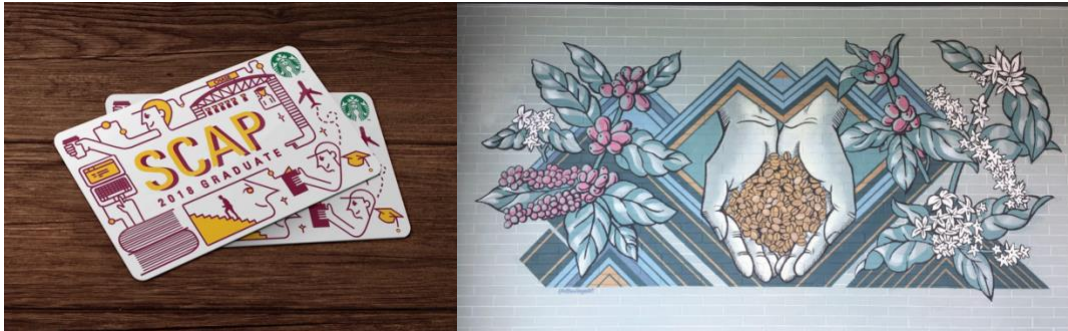
Beth Mitchell, was my first SM. In 2014, I was about to take a different job, and she said “you know Starbucks is paying for college. Are you sure this is the right time to leave?” It changed my life forever. As an alum, Beth's still looking out for me.





What training / learning did you receive at Starbucks that you find yourself returning to again and again?

Taking responsibility to make things right. In my role as a designer, I may not always get it perfect the first time, and that's okay, but I'll get there.



What's your most treasured Starbucks swag?

Probably my SCAP graduation cap. I decked it out with Starbucks stickers for the grad ceremony Starbucks hosted for us. Did "the walk" and everything. Starbucks did such a great job making us feel special.

What do you value most from your experience working at Starbucks?

My personal connections with my team and customers. Being at Starbucks almost forces you to be the best version of yourself; with your partners and your customers, no matter what's going on in your life.



Who or what is inspiring you right now?

Harriet Tubman because she wore so many hats in freeing her people through being a spy, nurse, suffrage reporter, political activist, and author. She was also so strategic. I remember one story. She was hiding behind a newspaper while traveling on a train. People knew she was illiterate but to avoid suspicion, she made sure the newspaper was positioned so it *looked* like she was reading

If you could have coffee with anyone, who would it be?

My Creative Director, Melinda Taylor, at 160over90. She embodies Starbucks values whether she knows it or not. It's not just about work, but also life, she's encouraging and constructive, all with such agency, humility, and gr

Which community action/nonprofit do you think is important right now?

The [Pajama Program in Atlanta](#). They do such a good job galvanizing support through local brands, plus, they make their cause personable through inviting volunteers to come read books to children. It's so special to wrap the reading session by giving the children a pair of pajamas.