Dr. David C. Munson, Jr.: Hello, RIT alumni and friends. Once again, this is President Dave Munson and I am thrilled to be visiting the New York City area on this particular leg of my alumni Tiger Tour.

Tonight, I have the pleasure of sitting down with Katie Linendoll, a two-time Emmy Award-winning TV personality, writer, tech expert, and global tech consultant. Katie is probably best known for her role as tech contributor on the TODAY Show, but she's also contributing as a tech expert on a variety of platforms, including ESPN, Fox News, a number of the major networks, Headline News Network, and The Weather Channel. Katie is also the founder of Katie Linendoll Productions, and she has written for ESPN the Magazine, CBS.com, Popular Science, and numerous other national publications. Katie is the former host of All Access Weekly on Spike TV and A&E's We Mean Business, and Katie hosts her own weekly tech podcast called Katie<dot>Show where she shares first looks in technology and science with the most notable minds in the industry. In fact, her podcast has climbed as high as number four in the iTunes technology charts. A 2005 alumna of the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, Katie is always on the hunt for the latest tech stories.

So Katie, welcome. It's—

Katie Linendoll: My goodness, I should feel like I should be interviewing you. You're the celebrity here.

Munson: It is terrific to finally meet you. I've heard so much about you and read so much about you, and now I have the real Katie right in front of me, which is wonderful.

Linendoll: Thank you so much. I have one correction. I only won one Emmy. The second one—I only bring this up because it's funny—I lost it to Yo Gabba Gabba! We'll leave that as is. First world problems.

Munson: We're inflating your record.

Linendoll: It's really an honor to be… Thank you for being here in New York.
Munson: Well, it's my pleasure. Obviously, it's quite a city, no other like it on the entire planet, but back to you. I've read that in your quest for the latest in tech, you've done some unusual things. You've been underwater diving with NASA astronauts and witnessed ways that mobile technology can rebuild a country's economy in the wake of a super typhoon. I'm confident that you have a tremendous number of technology related stories to tell as part of your research in uncovering various stories. And, kind of a multi-part question here, how did you develop such a love and passion for technology and what enabled you to better discover your passion and cultivate it over time?

Linendoll: It's a great question. I got my first kind of dive into tech when I was about 12, 13, which then it was so ahead of the curve, and now I have an 8-year-old niece that is just lapping me in terms of—

Munson: Oh, no.

Linendoll: Coding and engineering and robotics, at her age, so it's awesome to see where STEM has gone thus far, but my tech love started early, and I got my networking stories while I was in high school, I was in a special computer program. And then, obviously, coming to RIT and getting me... By then, it was an IT New Media degree. I know that has shifted a little bit, but I've always been fascinated with just computing and computers. This started as soon as I got my hands on. There was some kind of fascination with this digital world that I was truly compelled by and I felt like this is what I was meant to be working with.

Munson: Wow, wow. Neat story. You've been able to build a hugely impressive and rewarding career. Do you feel that you've had a role model at any time, maybe earlier in your career, perhaps a mentor? And if so, how much value do you place on mentoring experiences?

Linendoll: If I was to answer that 100 percent honest, I have the most amazing family, and I lean on them. I work in a very tough industry, and the media world, as you see firsthand every day when you turn on the TV, it's cutthroat, it's competitive, it's challenging, it's physically and mentally tough, and I lean on my family and my mom has been a huge, huge role model in my life and somebody that I can talk to and lean on, and I have three older sisters and an awesome dad.

Munson: Oh, wow, okay.

Linendoll: They keep me grounded. They're just so incredible in what they do. That has been really instrumental in keeping me, just keeping going the course.
**Munson:** Are there other techies in your family or no?

**Linendoll:** I'm the big techie.

**Munson:** Wow. You went out on your own limb.

**Linendoll:** I did, but it's fun like that, too, because then each one of us has our own expertise, and my sisters are all way cooler and way smarter than I am. And we all bring something different to the table, but, really, I think for me, in this world, it's been leaning on my family the most.

**Munson:** Great. You've had a lot of successes, and I enumerated some of those. What do you consider to be either your biggest success or maybe one of your biggest successes?

**Linendoll:** The first one that comes to mind hands down is the project that I've been working on really, and I don't call it a project, I call it a big part of my life. For the last seven years, I've worked very closely as a Big Sister in pediatric cancer.

**Munson:** Oh, wow.

**Linendoll:** And that started with my role at Sloan Kettering here in New York City, which is a known hospital for taking kids from all over the world, and I knew immediately, and I get chills talking about it, when I stepped in as my role, I was taking on, not just coming in and coming out once every six months, I work intimately with the kids. And, I became a Big Sister to five kids. I've lost four.

**Munson:** Oh, gosh.

**Linendoll:** And, from there, it's been the coolest experience. My nickname there is Crazy Katie, and they just... The rapport that we had, the one in particular, his name was Cole. He called me... I was his R2D2, and he was C3PO, and I even took him down to Disney for Star Wars Weekend, and when he passed, we created a foundation in his honor. And the tech side of this comes in because what we're doing now with the foundation is it's really, to my knowledge, we are the first foundation in the world to be using virtual reality in pediatric cancer as distraction
technology, and it's phenomenal because we're not just talking about it, we're actually implementing. We started implementing here in New York.

So when the kids are going through hours of chemo and radiation, which are anywhere from 15, 20-hour days, and they're there for weeks or months in the hospital, we have now VR. The metrics we're gathering from their breathing and their heart rate, they are so much more relaxed and subdued. And they can be underwater diving with whales or they can be on a roller coaster, and to see that come to life in addition to raising funds for clinical trials, which kept Cole, for example, with us for five extra years, that's been the most—

Munson: Wow.

Linendoll: Positive and rewarding combination of human technology… power of technology and the human heart, if you will.

Munson: That's a great story. That'd be particularly meaningful to my wife. She's very involved with The Chad Tough Foundation, which is raising money to combat pediatric brain cancer.

Linendoll: My goodness, yes.

Munson: We've seen child after child die from that.

Linendoll: It's very intense and what you see these families go through to save their child and what the child goes through, it is… it's completely changed my life and it's, it's very rewarding to be able to … I think no matter what the skillset you have in your life, there's something that you can give back and I think that's very powerful.

Munson: Life is a lot bigger than a career no matter how big the career is.

Linendoll: Amen. That's right.

Munson: But if we go back to your career for a moment, what do you think have been some of your bigger challenges in your career? You've done so many unusual things and it seems like nothing really throws you. So what are these challenges? How do you surmount them?

Linendoll: Yes, I've been on the road now, it's about 280 days a year.
Munson: Golly.

Linendoll: I think of the coolest challenges I have is, yes, I'm known for my work on air, but I also run my own production company, and the power what we have in this, this timeline of technology, what we can do... For example, we're out in Iceland in 10 days. I have a small, but mighty team. From the experience that I had at RIT, I learned how to do everything right out the gate. That's to shoot, to edit, and to produce, and I do that in my day-to-day. So I manage a small team that we all do everything, and I think that's really cool. When we're in the business, it's not just me going on and talking on camera. It's shooting in some of the most intense environments in the world. I've been to factually the second poorest part of the entire world, the slums of Kibera where I embedded myself. I've been underwater diving with NASA astronauts, some really physically and mentally challenging shoots that I continue to grow from and it's very humbling.

Munson: That sounds challenging. I'll say that. Wow. Wow. What advice would you have for our students at RIT, especially those who might envision themselves as entrepreneurs, somewhat like you?

Linendoll: Yes and I consult with many technology companies, both big and small, from the IBMs of the world to Intel and work closely with Amazon quite a bit, right down to the ma and pa companies. They create pretty phenomenal gadgets, and I think the common denominator in all of them that I would tell any entrepreneur or anyone in school, still right now, and it's so cheesy, but it is so true, if you don't love the hell out of what you're doing, it's game over.

Munson: All about passion.

Linendoll: 100 percent. My days, and I don't calculate, they're 19 hours long pretty consistently, but I'm like, "I just want more hours." I love what I'm doing. I love to keep researching, so it never feels like I'm doing work. You can't feel like you're doing work or it's game over.

Munson: So more, more, more. Wow.

Linendoll: Love what you're doing.

Munson: Wow. It sounds exhausting.
Linendoll: It's funny that one of the big companies that I work with is a sleep technology company and it's phenomenal, we don't have the time to go into it, but I'm like, "Maybe that's a, like, oxymoron because I don't sleep much."

Munson: Well, well, it sounds like you don't. Golly. What advice might you have for fellow alums in terms of how they could remain connected with RIT? I know you've been able to do that.

Linendoll: And I've had a lot of success with it. I can specifically say... like Sean Bratches is a perfect example. When you find people in your network that have similar goals and when you get to this point in your career, you want to help other people, and I love doing that. I think there's a power of networking. And yes, of course, I'm going to look for that person to be dedicated and motivated and hit the ground running because there's, you know, there’s responsibility that comes alongside with mentoring somebody because there’s a lot of work on the other end, as well, but people want to help. I want to help.

So I think, you know, getting out there and networking. At my core, I'm very introverted—

Munson: Oh I'm sure you are.

Linendoll: Very nerdy. It's... I have a very outward job. It's one side of my personality, but, you know, we're all different. We have all different kinds of sides. And I love to be in my computer and in my little world, but at the end of the day, we've got to push ourselves out there and network and to make those connections period.

Munson: Well and of course, at the university, we have some responsibility to make those opportunities not just available, but to advertise them, so—

Linendoll: Yup.

Munson: Well, one last question, Katie, and I have to ask you this kind of question. What can we expect to be the next big tech trend and is there anything you see on the horizon that we should be paying attention to?

Linendoll: Yes. I would say hands down, the last two weeks I've been doing... It's an honor to be hosting these events for IBM. I hosted three summits on both data science and... The cloud is here and right now, but the world of data science and AI is the next big thing. And companies,
big or small, you better get on board, you better understand it, and you better start moving in that direction.

I think another obvious one is, of course, virtual reality, which I touched on a little bit. I pray that it does not go in the realm of 3D TV because you really have to get your hands on it to experience it and understand it, but I would have to pick AI and data science, and then if we had to pick a hardware, I would go with VR.

**Munson:** I think that was a great answer. As a professor, I'm giving you an A+.

**Linendoll:** Yes! I love it.

**Munson:** Thanks so much, Katie. Thanks for being with us today. We hope we'll see you back in Rochester soon on our campus. And thanks to all our listeners for tuning in. As always, go Tigers.

**Linendoll:** Go, Tigers.