

Emily Pedone is no stranger to the spotlight. She has been dancing on stage since the age of two, but nothing could have prepared the seasoned performer for the speech she was about to give. Pedone stood outside of the Marshall Student Center in front of over 70 strangers. She took a deep breath, approached the podium, and started to speak.

The first time Pedone spoke in front of others about her struggle with anxiety and depression was last November at USF's Suicide Survivor's Night. She describes the experience as 'life changing' and is now a profound advocate for mental health in the USF community.

"I think it's important to use my knowledge and the trauma I went through to help others who are going through the same thing," Pedone said. "It wouldn't be fair if I didn't help people."

It seems as if Pedone's life mission is to help people. The other day at a local Publix, she saw a disoriented woman sitting alone in the parking lot. Instead of hastily walking past, Pedone stopped to talk to the confused woman and contacted the police.

"I noticed she had a hospital band on her wrist," Pedone said. "If I didn't help her, I don't know who else would."

Pedone is president of A Life Worth Living (ALL), a suicide prevention club on campus. The club meets weekly to discuss new ways on how to inform and educate the community about mental health.

"Emily has experience bringing awareness to mental health," ALL secretary Lexie George said. "She is easy to connect with and her passion shines through at each meeting."

Pedone is also the director of the Wellness and Disabilities board. Each semester, she finds a community partner for the board members to volunteer with and schedules bi-weekly service trips. Pedone met with the president of Friends Down Syndrome a few days ago to solidify a partnership for upcoming fall semester.

“Friends Down Syndrome does really great work helping families with children who are diagnosed,” Pedone said. “They are really excited to have us volunteer.”

In addition to her leadership roles on campus, Pedone is also active in the Tampa community. She worked on the Dana Young campaign and played a huge role in getting the candidate elected to the Florida Senate. Her interest in politics stems from her desire to reform mental health care. Pedone hopes her understanding of legislation will benefit her in the future if she works for the United Nations or The National Alliance of Mental Illness.

When Podone is not attending class or meetings on campus, the English major is writing screenplays or performing. She started acting in high school and uses theater to generate awareness. She once starred in a New York Film Academy production about a young girl living with Obsessive-compulsive disorder.

“I love acting because it’s story telling that makes a difference through a creative form,” Pedone said. “It helps people escape from reality or learn new things about reality.”

At 20, Pedone has figured out a way to turn her darkest weakness into her greatest strength. She is ready to begin fall semester and implement everything she has been planning in the summer.

“It’s possible to make a significant difference in someone’s life,” Pedone said. “Even on a college campus.”



Emily Pedone poses in front of the USF Library before heading to A Life Worth Living meeting.

