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[00:00:18] Colby D'Onofrio: Welcome to *Stocking the Pantry*, a CalFresh Healthy Living Podcast from Leah's Pantry. We'd like to acknowledge our funder, the CalFresh Healthy Living Program, an equal-opportunity employer and provider. On this show, we discuss any and all things community nutrition, food equity, and nutrition security. This is a space for thought leaders to share success stories and strategies for equity-centered and resilience-building initiatives. We hope to foster collaboration and community as well as leverage strengths among listeners, guests, and hosts as we share ideas and dreams of building a more equitable future where everyone has access to healthful, nourishing food.

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Hello, everyone, and welcome back to *Stocking the Pantry*. Today we are continuing our discussion about trauma-informed organizational change with Lindsey House, a nonprofit based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. On the last episode, you heard Tee interview Maggie Hoey and Nicole Adair, the executive director and program manager at Lindsey House. If you haven't had a chance to listen to part one yet, definitely check it out. Those ladies have some amazing stories and words of inspiration to share. To refresh your memory, Lindsey House is a housing program for mothers with children experiencing situational houselessness.

At Lindsey House, families are provided a fully furnished apartment and an array of onsite amenities. In addition, the mothers participate in a series of curricula, focus on financial literacy, workplace proficiency, and life skills. Through their time at Lindsey House, residents have the opportunity to grow these abilities, as well as build relationships and community with the staff and other moms who live there. Social support and positive relationships are a key aspect of a trauma-informed approach, and one place in particular that cultivates trust and strong relationships is the food pantry and nutrition education classes that the Lindsey House provides.

[00:02:40] Tee Atwell: This food pantry is so awesome and so is the person who runs it, Natalie Frech. Natalie supports Lindsey House residents in taking more steps towards wellness by working with them on their self-care goals, facilitating their round-the-table, nourishing families and food smarts curricula, and by working with the Lindsey House residents to redesign their onsite food pantry using her Nutrition Pantry Program training.

[00:03:05] Colby D'Onofrio: I first met Natalie when she was going through our Nutrition Pantry Program for implementers training and was first introduced to the Lindsey House pantry when she graduated them as a Gold Certified pantry. Way to go, y'all. Really great work. I recently got to chat with Natalie and she had such great

energy. Here she is to tell you a bit more about the pantry. Hi, Natalie. How are you today?

[00:03:32] Natalie Frech: Hi, I'm good, I'm happy to be here. How are you?

[00:03:35] Colby D'Onofrio: I'm doing well, also super happy to have you today. Can you start by giving us a background of who you are, how you got to Lindsey House, and a bit about yourself?

[00:03:45] Natalie Frech: Sure. My name is Natalie Frech, and I am a student in the Master of Public Health degree program at the University of Oklahoma's Health Science Center in Tulsa. Through the past year, I've had the wonderful opportunity to be part of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, and through that Fellowship program, I've been able to plan and implement a community-based project. My community site is Lindsey House, which is a transitional housing facility for single moms and their children.

[00:04:17] Colby D'Onofrio: Wow, you sound really smart.

[laughter]

[00:04:21] Natalie Frech: I'm trying.

[00:04:26] Colby D'Onofrio: You work in the pantry at Lindsey House. Can you tell me a bit about what the pantry is like? What does it feel like? What does it look like when you walk in? Can you give us a little bit of an audio tour of the space?

[00:04:40] Natalie Frech: Sure. To restart on a grander scale a bit, Lindsey House is a facility that has 24 apartments for 24 families, and each of these apartments has their own kitchen space with a pantry and appliances, but there's also an on-site food pantry that all the Lindsey House residents can access. Outside of the apartments, there's this big common area called the Great Room, and it's a beautiful open space with tables, sofas, there's a kids' play area, and there are also these different rooms that you can access. It has access to a gym, a laundry room, and a food pantry.

The pantry is open 24/7 for the residents, so there are no barriers to accessing it at all. It's thought of as something supplemental that they can use whenever they need it. Inside of the pantry, there are two fridges, so we have refrigeration for fresh produce, and we have freezer space as well for things like frozen vegetables and frozen meat. Then we have the shelf stable section. There's a bunch of different canned vegetables, a lot of which right now are without added sodium which is quite nice. We have some canned fruits, canned protein, shelf-stable milk, breakfast options like oatmeal and cereal among a bunch of other different foods.

Sprinkled around in the pantry, there are different things that we'd call nudges, which are meant to make certain food items or nutrition skills feel a little more approachable and interesting. For instance, next to the canned vegetables, there's a sign about rinsing and draining canned foods to reduce sodium. Another sign by the brown rice that highlights the benefits of choosing whole grains. There are additional signs about different foods in the pantry that could be bundled together to create a healthy, simple meal.

We also have a section with different cookbooks like Crock Pot cookbooks, cookbooks for kids that residents can borrow, like it's a little library. Residents can go in there, see the different signs, see the labels for the food, look at the cookbooks, and pretty much shop in the pantry if that makes sense. If they're missing some ingredients from their own pantry, they can access this pantry.

[00:06:55] Colby D'Onofrio: Wow, that's awesome. It's really-- the way you described it, is really giving a community vibe, it's a community pantry. "Oh shoot, I'm missing a can of beans for my burrito tonight, I'll hop on down to the community pantry, grab one, no problem, no issue." That's really cool. Also, loving the community space, the Great Room with the gym and the laundry. I'm like, "Wait, that sounds really cool." That just seems like a great little hub with lots of little things branching off of it for people to come together in. How beautiful.

[00:07:26] Natalie Frech: Yes, absolutely. The kids from different families will come together and play in the kids' area. It really does feel like a community there at Lindsey House. How you said that really made me think about how we've really incorporated all the different voices of the Lindsey House families in this endeavor to redesign the pantry. In the very beginning, I had interviews with them to better understand what foods they wanted to see in the pantry and how the foods in there should be organized.

In a way, the Lindsey House residents have taken some ownership in what the pantry looks and feels like, and it really is part of their shared home in a sense. We're also always taking in their feedback. We're implementing some surveys to distribute every few months to get a sense of what new residents coming in feel about the pantry, what should be added, and how we can adapt the pantry as needed moving forward.

[00:08:24] Colby D'Onofrio: Amazing. That incorporation of voice and transparency is such a key part of being trauma-informed. I know that the Lindsey House Pantry went through our Nutrition Pantry Program, which provides a trauma-informed approach for more health-focused, client-centered distributions. All of that definitely seems to be incorporated in the pantry. Can you tell me a little bit about what the impact of bringing this trauma-informed approach to food and nutrition at Lindsey House has looked like?

[00:08:57] Natalie Frech: Absolutely. We found that using a trauma-informed approach to food and nutrition has been incredibly important in opening up conversations more

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easily. A lot of the conversations we've had about food and nutrition and our personal food histories hadn't really happened so much before, but are now happening much more regularly with Lindsey House residents. In addition to the pantry redesign using the Nutrition Pantry Program, I've also facilitated some of Leah's Pantry's curricula.

We've done the Around the Table Nourishing Families Workshop, and then we've done the Food Smarts Workshop. Using these different elements, we've brought more of a trauma-informed approach to food and nutrition into Lindsey House and had those conversations more frequently. At Lindsey House, the ladies that live there, they're pretty busy. They're working full-time, they're nurturing children, and a lot of them are taking extra classes or working towards certifications. They have a lot on their plate, no pun intended.

All of these things combined with potentially some other challenges that they've experienced in their past, just make thinking about food and nutrition all the more challenging, and having that busy lifestyle and having day-to-day stressors can just make it more difficult to plan for upcoming dinners or think about what groceries should be on the list for this week. That just makes it more challenging to nourish yourself and nourish your family. Having these conversations in a safe space and sharing resources and sharing what our successes have been, what our challenges have been, and what options are out there, makes it all the more approachable and much less stressful for the residents.

[00:10:44] Colby D'Onofrio: I'd imagine also that when you come together for these workshops, the ladies are able to chat with each other and they're able to see that someone else who maybe had a similar background to them, "Oh look, they're cooking too. They're able to feed their family, they're able to shop for groceries. If she can do it, okay, I can do it too." I'd imagine that there's probably a bit of rising tide lifts all boats kind of vibe. Have there been other conversations that have come out of these workshops besides just, "Here's how you chop an onion, here's how to chop herb?"

[00:11:17] Natalie Frech: Oh, absolutely. All of the above that you mentioned was totally accurate, it's nice to see that they're learning from each other and building each other up, but definitely more has come up during the workshops than just chopping onions or different foods to pick at the grocery store. There have been a lot of conversations around parenting and stress, when we talked about toxic stress, for instance, there were several ladies that night that had their own stories to share in their own descriptions of what toxic stress feels like for them and how it's made things more challenging but I've also seen them share coping strategies or share meal ideas with each other.

When we talked about food, mood, and energy, one of the questions was, do you notice any differences in the way you feel after you eat fast food? Unanimously, several people said at once, "Sluggish".

[laughter]

[00:12:16] Colby D'Onofrio: Me, too.

[00:12:18] Natalie Frech: Definitely. Same here. It's something that is a shared experience, for sure, something that we all can relate to, but it's also really showing how there's a balancing act between choosing healthy foods and taking the time that it takes to prepare them and potentially higher cost versus choosing convenience foods that will taste the same every single time, but maybe aren't as healthy for you. It's definitely a balancing act and it's something that we're navigating together in these conversations and using as a way to support one another in a safe space as we go through this and as we start to develop healthier habits together.

[00:13:04] Colby D'Onofrio: I love what you brought up about it being a balancing act because I think that's something that a trauma-informed approach brings to the forefront, that it's really unrealistic to expect someone, especially a working single mom to go to the grocery store, cook a full meal three times a day for themselves and their kids, still go to work, still work on their classes or certificates, and still get a good night's rest and be able to show up for their kids in the important ways. Just listing off all of that, I'm already out of breath.

[laughter]

[00:13:32] Natalie Frech: Totally.

[00:13:32] Colby D'Onofrio: It's like actually doing all of it, and it's balance because sometimes you just got to get some food in your belly so the kids stop crying, the kids have enough energy to do their homework tonight, and you can all get to bed and you'll try again tomorrow with a more healthy option, and that's okay, like not shaming anyone for that. Not saying that's wrong or that's not okay. Lifting up people for what they are doing great and if we aren't perfect all the time, let's not make perfection the enemy of progress.

[00:13:59] Natalie Frech: I love that. I totally agree. I think having self-compassion and rebuilding healthy relationships with food is so important because some foods are labeled as evil when in reality no food is really evil. It's more about choosing what's going to nourish you, but not feeling terrible if you're making a different choice on other nights, and that's totally understandable, and some of the ladies have shared different struggles they've faced with body image or with diets they've gone on and it's really complicated their relationship with food. Backtracking and talking through it and

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processing it and having conversations that they might not have had before has been so beneficial and so eye-opening.

[00:14:47] Colby D'Onofrio: Can you speak a little bit about the role that nourishment plays in supporting women and that healing at Lindsey House?

[00:14:55] Natalie Frech: Definitely. Nourishment is such a large part of keeping oneself and one's family healthy, and it's important, of course, to role model nourishing healthy behaviors for children. I think a lot of this time that they spend while they're living at Lindsey House, they really get to practice building healthy routines. For example, in one of our conversations about food, mood, and energy, there were several ladies who had this common experience of waking up, getting the kids ready for school, not having the time to have breakfast for themselves. Like you mentioned, there's so many different things on the to-do list each day.

Then a few hours later maybe late morning, they might have a snack, and then in the afternoon, a few energy drinks, and then feel a crash later in the day. That's a pretty common experience for them. Having a way to encourage routines or meal planning, things like prepping overnight oats the night before, or drinking more water instead of caffeinated beverages, for instance. We're starting to shift what nourishment means and looks like for the different ladies at Lindsey House.

I think they're starting to feel that shift in how they're feeling each day as they integrate these changes into their lives. I think that will play a pretty big role in their journey toward independence and self-sufficiency, moving forward. Then nourishment as a whole will go along with them in their journey, moving forward.

[00:16:22] Colby D'Onofrio: I love what you said about integration, that this isn't something that is just going to happen overnight. It's we have to integrate it into our lives. We have to add a piece here, add a piece there. That other piece might fall off sometimes, but it's all about slowly adding it in so that we can make behavior change. We know that behavior change isn't something you make a list and then tomorrow you're going to have a perfect change in your behavior for the rest of your life. It just doesn't work like that.

You have to do it slowly, you have to make it achievable, attainable. It sounds like that is really what's happening here, that people are supported in making these slight changes to live a more healthy, nourished life.

[00:17:00] Natalie Frech: Definitely. That's actually something I was thinking about earlier today. Not to get too nerdy, but there is a behavioral change model called the Stages of Change. It describes different stages we all go through when we're making changes in our habits or our behaviors. It starts with pre-contemplation, and that's when you're not even thinking about making a change. You might not even know about a

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change you could make. Then it moves into contemplation where you're thinking a little bit more, "Oh, do I want to make a change in this, what would that look like?"

Then it moves into preparation to make the change, action, which is actually making the change, and maintenance. Something I've observed while working with the ladies at Lindsey House is that progress and success looks different for everyone. For some, that's moving from the preparation stage into the action stage, and already seeing a big change being made. For others, that might be moving from pre-contemplation to contemplation, and that's pretty huge too. Everyone has their different journeys and their different pace to go through, and it's all really remarkable to witness.

[00:18:07] Colby D'Onofrio: That is such a key part of being trauma-informed. Is celebrating those differences all as successes. Just because not everyone is in maintenance, doesn't mean that there aren't great things happening along the way. Moving from pre-contemplation to contemplation is a huge step, and there's a lot that goes into that. It's not like you just contemplate it one day and the next day you jump right into action. It's a pre, you have to actually go through those steps and make those little changes to set yourself up for success.

I think that's great what you said about celebrating those different stages that everyone is at and seeing them all as successes because they are, and it's just where different people are at at different times.

[00:18:48] Natalie Frech: Absolutely. Yes, it's definitely been a learning experience for me. I think for one resident cooking at home three times a week is super fun and super achievable, and for another resident, cooking one time per week might be a big challenge, and reaching that goal could be really incredible for that resident. Everyone is different and it's just nice to have to see that over time, and to build that relationship and learn that about them over time.

[00:19:20] Colby D'Onofrio: Definitely. A big part of trauma-informed care is meeting people with compassion and connection, which is sounds exactly like what you're describing here. How have the relationships that you've made at Lindsey House affected you as a staff/volunteer/fellow there?

[00:19:39] Natalie Frech: So much. It's affected me and it's affected this work so much. I think that's been one of my biggest lessons, is how important it is to really build those relationships. Coming into this project about a year ago I was feeling some self-doubt. I was a new person coming in and meeting the Lindsey House residents, not knowing too much about them and vice versa, them not knowing too much about me. Here I am coming in to talk about nutrition and self-care and building those into a healthy routine.

Part of me was wondering, "Am I the right person to do this? Am I going to do a good job?" I am trying to talk about making nutrition approachable, but I'm not a mom. I don't

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have children to take care of. I don't know what that experience is like. There are a lot of lived experiences that the Lindsey House residents have that I don't have. Is this a mismatch? Is it going to be just odd that I'm the one coming in and talking to them about this?

Over time, after getting to talk with the Lindsey House residents more and more, meet with them, I realized it's more about being the type of person who will take the time to learn about someone's barriers, learn what makes them who they are, understand their challenges, what their successes look like, and building that relationship. Also sharing things about myself. There are some Lindsey House residents I've had lots of different conversations with. We've talked about our families and what we like to eat growing up and just different things about ourselves that might not necessarily have been what was in the workshop handbook, but things that are just more about being people.

That's helped a lot. It's helped me to understand where they are and what strategies might work best for them in their journey towards wellness. It's also helped them to feel more comfortable opening up to me and asking me questions that they have that they didn't feel comfortable asking in the very beginning. It's just been really transformative, and I think that time and that commitment makes all the difference.

[00:21:45] Colby D'Onofrio: I'm so glad you got to see that human side of this work because I think public health can feel so far removed sometimes when we're talking about populations and statistics and epidemiology, great stuff. It's so interesting, but it can feel so dry. When we actually get to talk to people and listen to their stories, and I loved what you said that it wasn't so much about you being a nutritionist or you teaching them how to eat healthfully. It was more about you being a person who was going to listen. That made all the difference, that is like the heart of a trauma-informed approach and you are embodying it so well and it sounds like it's really working out at the Lindsey House.

[00:22:26] Natalie Frech: Oh, thank you. It's been a ton of fun, and I think I really have seen some positive changes throughout this past year.

[music]

[00:22:50] Tee Atwell: I really love the holistic view Natalie takes with this pantry in classes. It's so much more than a food pantry or a nutrition class. It's really a vehicle for connection.

[00:23:01] Colby D'Onofrio: Yes, definitely. The pantry meets their trauma-informed goals and then so much more. A nourishing diet is so critical to healing from trauma, and as we mentioned before, so is interpersonal connection and they're really doing both of these. Two birds, one stone, or as Tee likes to say, two birds, one scone, by integrating a TI approach into the pantry and at Lindsey House as a whole, participants'

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voices are lifted up and incorporated in the programs and pantry, which as I imagine would make them feel valued in what they have to say matters to those around them. I think, as humans, we all just want to feel heard and cared about.

[00:23:50] Tee Atwell: Lindsey House is feeding more than two birds with one scone with this trauma-informed approach.

[00:23:55] Colby D'Onofrio: You know what, we know it really isn't very effective to only work in one area of healing and one area of support at a time. A holistic approach is much more effective and continues to still be effective even after the services end.

[00:24:11] Tee Atwell: Absolutely. Like Maggie and Nicole talked about, women leave Lindsey House with lifelong connections. Something that probably wouldn't have come about if they only offered help in food or housing or childcare.

[00:24:23] Colby D'Onofrio: Yes, Lindsey House, it's like a basket of support that holds these women during their time in the program and then also long after.

[00:24:33] Tee Atwell: Yes, and some of those women even come back to Lindsey House to be the threads of that basket, like Nicole. When people feel supported by their communities, they turn around and provide that same support to the person behind them. It's like a domino effect of goodwill and warm intentions.

[00:24:50] Colby D'Onofrio: Yes, indeed.

[music]

[00:25:03] Colby D'Onofrio: Before I let you go, I have one last question. What do you stock your pantry with, literally and or figuratively?

[00:25:11] Natalie Frech: I like that you included figuratively in the question, but I'll go literal. I have a ton of spices and sauces. I have probably at least four different kinds of hot sauces in there currently. I just love different flavors. I love that you can make similar meals all taste pretty different and unique just by utilizing different spices or sauces. I have quite a bit of those. I also have a big container of old-fashioned oats always in my pantry just because I have oatmeal pretty regularly for breakfast with fruit, so that's always in there.

What else? Garbanzo beans, also black beans, but canned garbanzo beans have been a favorite of mine recently, so there are quite a few cans of those in there right now and my pantry always has some type of dark chocolate in there as well. I love reaching for a little bit of dark chocolate as a treat, so that's also always in my pantry. It brings me so much joy. Yes, those are some of the main things that come to my mind when I think about how I'm stalking my pantry.

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[00:26:38] Colby D'Onofrio: For more information on Lindsey House, check out their website at lindseyhouse.org. That's L-I-N-D-S-E-Y-H-O-U-S-E.O-R-G, or find them on Instagram at LindseyHouseTulsa, or on Facebook at LindseyHouse. Thank you so much for joining us today, and we'll see you next time. Ciao.

[music]

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