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[00:00:06] Colby: Welcome to *Stalking 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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[00:01:03] Tee Atwell: Hello and welcome to *Stocking the Pantry*. I'm Tee Atwell.

[00:01:07] Colby D'Onfrio: I'm Colby D'Onfrio.

[00:01:10] Tee: This is the second season of *Stocking the Pantry*. We are so happy to be back for another season of talking with community leaders, sharing success stories, and highlighting a trauma-informed approach in action.

[00:01:27] Colby: If you are new here, welcome. We're so happy you decided to join us. This podcast is a product of Leah's Pantry, a leader in trauma-informed nutrition, in partnership with CalFresh Healthy Living. On our show, we aim to highlight the experiences of SNAP educators and people doing great work in their community in the realm of food security and social services.

[00:01:53] Tee: Through interviewing professionals and sharing stories with our listeners, we really hope we all can learn from each other and continue providing care and education through a trauma-informed lens.

[00:02:05] Colby: To kick off Season 2, we are taking a stroll down memory lane and reflecting on our favorite moments from our first nine episodes.

[00:02:16] Tee: If you listened through Season 1, we hope this episode will spark your memory. If you haven't had a chance to listen to Season 1, hopefully, this will pique your interest to check out some of our previous episodes.

[00:02:32] Colby: Let's get into it. In looking back at our library of episodes, I first want to say, wow, we have come so far.

[00:02:43] Tee: Definitely. The show has evolved so much. We have grown as hosts, okay I'd say, alongside such a great expanding podcast team.

[00:02:54] Colby: Absolutely. As we kick off this season, we want to extend a huge thank you to the people working behind the scenes that made this beautiful show happen.

[00:03:06] Tee: We see you, we appreciate you, and we wouldn't be here without you.

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[00:03:13] Colby: Absolutely. That's right. Speaking of programs, we noticed some themes emerging as we reviewed Season 1. The first theme, program.

[00:03:23] Tee: That is exactly right. We highlighted many phenomenal programs in our first season starting right here in our own home organization, Leah's Pantry.

[00:03:34] Colby: For Episode 1, we sat down with the OG Leah's Pantry people, Executive Director Adrienne Markworth, and Director of Curriculum Monica Bhagwan. They told us about how Leah's Pantry came into existence. Surprise, fun fact, it started with baby food, and where the organization adopted the thing that we are now known for, a trauma-informed approach to nutrition.

[00:03:59] Tee: It turns out at the heart of a trauma-informed approach is positive, meaningful relationships.

[00:04:07] Colby: Who would have think it?

[00:04:09] Tee: Now here's Adrian and Monica in episodes one and two to tell you a bit more.

[00:04:16] Adrienne Markworth: Specifically within Leah's Pantry, we had an opportunity to continue our partnership with Bridge Housing. It's interesting because initially, Bridge said, "Oh, thanks but no thanks on Potrero. We have a dedicated educator. It's really important for us to have the same person in the room." They were experimenting with a model they were calling trauma-informed community building at the time. Monica and I ended up going to a meeting there and talking with them about what they needed. They said, "Listen, our educator just left and we're wondering whether Leah's Pantry would be able to step in," but it was just a different ask.

It was not like the other workshops we'd been doing for that organization where six weeks at a time, here and there, it was very flexible. This was like, "No, we really want you guys to be here for three years. Not only that, we'd like it to be the same person," so that's a different request. This was coming out of their trauma-informed principles translation into their very specific setting, was to be doing a redevelopment of a public housing project as well as running the programs and appreciating the destabilizing effect that all of that had on the residents.

They were contractually required to offer program services, but they were also really aware of what the building impacts were. They were very thoughtfully trying to align their programs with what was needed to keep the residents of Potrero feeling included and safe in the community, even as they might be asked to leave or even as things might come up in rentals or the number of people in the houses or whatever the issues were.

At that time, I think Monica, drawing on the thinking that she'd already done about this issue, was able to stand up and say, "Yes, I'll do it. I will commit to every single Thursday going to Potrero and being a relationship with the residents, not just being a service provider." After that, I think she and I were both on the same page pretty quickly that there was quite an opportunity for us to look at the translation of this trauma-informed community building, all the SAMHSA principles specifically into

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nutrition and food security. It was nice to have that opportunity for such a specific and transparent request by a partner.

It took a long time after that [chuckles] for us to really get where we needed to go, but it was very thoughtful work and it was hard work. We were also busy doing a lot of other things with the organization. It wasn't as though we could just stop and make this huge pivot. The actual official pivot didn't come until 2019 although we did start working very intensely in that area probably starting in 2016.

[00:07:01] Monica Bhagwan: Yes. It was a good synergy in that some of the conversation was starting to percolate in services, but not as heavily as it is now. I think when people recognize their story in the material they're learning or have it acknowledged, have a room to acknowledge-- There's so many stories, but when we create material where that is acknowledged, they feel seen. I think people want to feel seen and related to, and have the experience feel like their own.

Mulling over a focus group that I did recently where the people, the gentleman we talked to have lost custody of their children, and yet they're so passionate about being fathers, and thinking about how a workshop could really help them regain a sense of themselves as fathers. They wanted to talk about food. They wanted to talk about feeding their kids and how much they care about it. At the same time, they're dealing with some pretty serious issues and life issues.

Both things have to be available to them to be able to feel like they can talk about what's real in their lives and how they overcome those challenges and what support they need to be able to still feed their kids and to still provide a meal on the table. Our SNAP-Ed participants bring so much into the room already. I've had just great experiences getting to enjoy people in a workshop setting that I would just want to make that more of an experience for people in that they can get more out of it. They can ask more questions and they can make it feel more relevant and applicable to their lives.

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[00:08:49] Tee: Yo, they said it so well. Positive relationships are the foundation of Leah's Pantry and what we teach.

[00:08:58] Colby: Interpersonal connection heals.

[00:09:01] Tee: Mic drop. Yes. Moving on to Episode 3, we stayed close to home interviewing a superstar implementer from our Nutrition Pantry Program, also known as NPP.

[00:09:18] Colby: Francis Villalpando is a seasoned implementer who sat on our NPP Advisory Board and continues to do phenomenal work with food pantries in her community of LA.

[00:09:29] Tee: When we asked her to be on the show and if she would invite a pantry leader that went through MPP2, she jumped at the opportunity and introduced us to Sharon Plunkett, the nutrition services manager for St. Joseph's Center in LA.

[00:09:45] Colby: They were such a joy to talk to that I think our conversation ended up going what? Was it two hours? [laughs]

[00:09:54] Tee: Yes. Love that. That was before we had our podcast manager, Gabriel, to edit things down Count for us. Thank goodness for Gabriel.

[00:10:03] Colby: Thank goodness. We definitely learned a lesson there. Two hours is probably too much,-

[laughter]

[crosstalk]

[00:10:09] Colby: -but it was hard to stop the conversation. They were so great to talk with. [laughs]

[00:10:15] Tee: Definitely. What really struck me about this conversation were the levels that Francis and Sharon saw in food distribution. Yes, they are giving out food, but they both recognize it is much more than that.

[00:10:33] Colby: Yes. Acknowledging that a pantry is more than just a low-cost or free grocery store is something that we talk a bit about in NPP, but these two women really walk the walk and took that message to heart.

[00:10:47] Tee: Their dedication to their community and lifting people up cannot be overlooked. We're going to listen back to them sharing a bit about what working in a pantry means to them. First you'll hear Francis share the achievements of St. Joseph's Center, and then you'll hear Sharon talk about the empowerment that a pantry can support.

[00:11:08] Francis Villalpando: One of the first things that just sets them apart is that they really thrive in forming and maintaining great partnerships to leverage their resources, whether it be for composting, for increasing their food donations and food variety, for bringing on health clinics, or for closed distribution. Just such a broad range of partnerships that they were able to get on board to consistently bring more services to their members. It's just fantastic.

They also spent quite a bit of time collecting customer surveys because that was just baseline data that they didn't have that they wanted to make sure that they were listening to what the customers were saying and then going from there to address any gaps. They also did quite a bit in terms of how they set up their food so that the healthy options are at the forefront and highlighting the healthy messages, bringing forth more produce to cater to their specific cultures.

They have a high Russian population, so they had to learn what are the food preferences for Russian communities so that we can be ready to serve them, and inclusively bringing forth printed nutrition education material in that language. Just a lot of different things. I think they're still working on writing their volunteer policies and operation modules that they're going to be updating, but just an array of things that they did, that we're just so proud of all of their achievements.

[00:12:53] Sharon Plunkett: There's the empowerment piece that the pantry is an opportunity to empower the people who are coming there with nutrition information, with access to whatever-- It's giving some power back to people like, "Make better choices. Even though income is an issue, here's what you need to know," though all the recipe cards, all the menu books, all this stuff, they're gobbled up by our members, all the stuff that the Leah's Pantry, that Francis's team provided to us because they're beautiful.

There's an inherent beauty in you go to a pantry, but then you take this beautiful book home, and it's like, "Oh, I could do this with beans. Okay. Let me try that." It's engaging somebody at that higher level of creativity, and that's good for the soul, that's good for the heart, it's good for people. There are so many ways that the pantry is an opportunity to enrich. That's why I love it. It really is a hub within the community and it's a place where no shame at all.

The world's not working right now and there's a lot of people coming to the pantry that wouldn't have dreamed of coming to a pantry five years ago, wouldn't have needed to. That we are accessible and as normal a thing to engage with. There's a meal service or a blue apron. It's another way to engage. It doesn't say something about how much you're succeeding or not in life. I think that's really important.

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[00:14:35] Sharon Plunkett: We try to have it be a beautiful experience.

[00:14:39] Colby: Now, speaking of empowerment and programs, we also got to chat with Wendy Willard and Vanessa Davis for Episode 4. They both contributed their lived experience to the creation of Leah's Pantry's Fostering Nourished Families curriculum.

[00:14:56] Tee: A little about Fostering Nourished Families, it's designed for foster families, or resource families as they are called in California. It was essential to have those with lived experience within the foster care system play a role in developing the curriculum.

[00:15:14] Colby: To effectively reach the communities and people who are the target population of a program, we need to ensure that the program is authentic and committed to meeting them where they're at in their experience. Through our conversations with Wendy and Vanessa, the importance of including lived experience in a program really shone through.

[00:15:35] Tee: Vanessa graciously told us about her experience as a child in the system, and we were so thankful to hear her perspective.

[00:15:45] Colby: Wendy has also been involved in the foster care system, but as a resource parent, and this was not a perspective that I had had the privilege of hearing before.

[00:15:55] Tee: Yes. Wendy actually used to work at Leah's Pantry, so she has an understanding of a trauma-informed approach. You can actually hear her speak about the patience a trauma-informed approach requires.

[00:16:08] Colby: It definitely requires some patience.

[00:16:09] Tee: Oh, yes.

[00:16:10] Colby: [chuckles] It requires patience to be able to step out of your comfort zone, meet another person where they're at even if that's not where you're at or even if it isn't where you might want them to be. A trauma-informed approach acknowledges that other person as a whole, unique, and complex person who is healing and growing.

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[00:16:30] Tee: Yes, very much so. Here, let's hear Wendy share her story about feeding foster kids in her care.

[00:16:38] Wendy Willard: Yes. I think just the last thing I'll add on that is being able to surrender that as something that you don't have to change overnight, to your point of this fruit doesn't ripen overnight, it's this idea that all these things have been baked into them for a pretty long time. If they spend the whole day eating white or brown foods today, it's not the end of the world.

I'll get a few colors into them, maybe one today, one tomorrow. It doesn't take as much patience when you're willing to surrender the control of that and say, "Yes, it's a marathon, it's something that's going to happen over the long haul." I think what's really hard about foster care is I often am not around to see the end of the marathon, right?

[00:17:32] Colby: Right. Wow. Yes.

[00:17:33] Wendy: I'm there just for a leg of it. That's challenging, but also just forces me to trust that what I'm doing is going to have a long-term benefit even if I don't see the short-term benefit necessarily. One of the first things that became very obvious was that even just their habits around the dinner table were very different than ours. We had both grown up in homes where you sat together at dinner and you ate together. They were in a very large family, I think nine kids in the family, and had been living in a lot of different places, sometimes unhoused, and they had really struggled to have food, right?

[00:18:21] Tee: Yes.

[00:18:22] Wendy: They had this habit of as soon as the food was put down, it was the grab-and-go mode. It definitely wasn't sitting and sharing. We were very surprised by that. "Wait, whoa, you need to sit with us." "Wait, why do I have to sit with you?" Like, "I'm going to go watch TV." "No, we sit and eat together." "Why? That's boring. That doesn't sound interesting to me. What are we going to talk about?"

Then when we actually did sit down, what a lot of us might call table manners, you teach your kids sometimes when they're little like, "Okay, when you have these types of meals, pass the food around," or is it reaching over and grabbing food off of someone else's plate? All kinds of different things. These girls really enjoyed football.

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[00:19:27] Colby: The final episode we'd like to highlight in this theme of programs is Episode 5 where we spoke with some folks from Lindsey House. We got to talk with Maggie Hoey, president and CEO, Nicole Eddy, program manager, and Natalie Frech who plays a crucial role in their on-site Pantry.

[00:19:49] Tee: Lindsey House is a residential housing program for single mothers and their children who are experiencing situational houselessness, situational meaning the lack of housing that's caused by a significant life event and tends to be short term as opposed to someone experiencing chronic houselessness.

[00:20:08] Colby: In our conversations, I was really impressed by the strong sense of community at Lindsey House. The ways in which the moms came together to support each other and to discuss challenges they may be facing or successes they're experiencing, it all felt really empowering.

[00:20:25] Tee: Yes. I love that Natalie pointed out that these conversations often happen in the cooking or nutrition education classes, and that they're associated with their on-site pantry.

[00:20:39] Colby: Yes, those are some of the programs that Natalie runs. Lindsey House as a whole has integrated a trauma-informed approach into their organization and programming, and the impact is overwhelmingly positive.

[00:20:53] Tee: They even go the extra mile to understand where the women in the program are at and take huge strides to meet them there, metaphorically speaking.

[00:21:04] Colby: We'd like to let Maggie and Nicole tell you a bit about how they embody a trauma-informed approach at Lindsey House.

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[00:21:11] Colby: First, you'll hear Maggie Hoey, president and CEO, and then you'll hear Nicole Eddy, programs manager and a graduate of Lindsey House.

[00:21:22] Maggie Hoey: If I can't understand it, then how can a new family understand it? Not intentionally so, but we had a lot of rules that felt unwritten to me. For using Brene Brown's to be unclear is to be unkind, there was a lot of things that didn't feel very clear to me. We set a high bar for our families and we do expect a lot from them, but in that there needs to be a lot of transparency on what those expectations are. Interestingly thinking about it, while this work is different than what I've done, a lot of what I've learned in managing employees is directly applicable to the accountability we're providing.

We have been on a journey. We're not done. That work will continue of really leading with transparency and accountability, so you will know exactly how you stand. In the Lindsey House program, we give people chances because we know life happens and it's not personal. They're managing a lot, and so we're leading with that compassionate lens, but not lowering our expectations. I think that's a really important distinction is we can be incredibly supportive. Nicole said it perfectly, we

can lead with love and still hold them accountable and still have high expectations for them because we know what they're capable of.

[00:22:55] Nicole Eddy: They're here for a reason because they've struggled with making good choices. It is going really well because we are asking those questions, and everything starts with a conversation now. It's the conversation of what's going on, what's happened, how can we support you? The turnover rate has dropped, the success rate has gone up. People are making it. There have been times recently where I've thought, "This girl is not going to make it." Then months later, you're like, "Look at her. Look at that growth. Look at what she just said. Look at that decision she just made," and it reminds you of why you're here. It fills your cup up. It makes tomorrow so much better.

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[00:23:58] Tee: All right. Let's take a little bit of a detour and talk about our next theme focused on CalFresh Healthy Living Forum, an annual conference for CalFresh Healthy Living stakeholders.

[00:24:13] Colby: For anyone not familiar, CalFresh Healthy Living is California's version of SNAP-Ed. This conference brings together any and all professionals working to educate and provide programming for participants of CalFresh, also known as SNAP in other states.

[00:24:31] Tee: The theme of the forum in 2023, which I really appreciated, was equity and action, supporting healthy communities together. To build excitement around the forum, we shined the spotlight on three sets of presenters at the forum.

[00:24:49] Colby: The first was a session about engaging participants with disabilities in nutrition and physical activity. We were joined by Cailin McLaughlin and Cristina Luquin, nutrition educators from UCCE Central Sierra.

[00:25:05] Tee: They talk to us about the importance of being able to adapt to meet the needs of participants so everyone can enjoy the classes they offer.

[00:25:15] Colby: Here are Cailin, who you'll hear first, and Cristina, who you'll hear second, to speak about their experiences and advice for working with people with disability.

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[00:25:26] Cailin McLaughlin: Throughout the years, I've just noticed some participants use mobility aids such as crutches or wheelchairs. However, disabilities are not always visible, and so some participants have actually come up to me to let me know if there is some sort of adaptation or modification that I may be able to do on the spot because, again, this is information that is not always shared with us as educators ahead of time. That has been sometimes the challenge. The success is that I've been able to move forward and successfully adapt to what is needed.

[00:26:07] Colby: The first word that came to my mind when both of you were speaking was adapt. It sounds like you're both very adaptive. Whether you are in the

classroom and in the spot, someone says that they need accommodations, or Cailin, in your case, you took the initiative to educate yourself to make sure that you could provide appropriate curriculum for people who do have disabilities. I think you're not alone in feeling like there's not a lot of guidance in this area. That's why I'm really excited to hear what you all have to share at the forum. That leads me into my next question which is, why do you feel that this is an important topic to share about at the forum this year?

[00:26:47] Cailin: It's an important topic because having participants be able to comfortably engage in all planned activities is part of the learning. When an activity is not accessible or it's hard to do for somebody, that individual may have a harder time learning or grasping the information that we're throwing. I would actually like to share an example of what I'm talking about. This happened to me this summer with a group of adults. I had scheduled a physical activity at the beginning of five nutrition lessons. The goal was to go outside the first 30 minutes and just walk around the neighborhood and, again, engage them in physical activity for about 30 minutes.

I had, again, previously planned three routes that we were going to walk, so again, this is part of my planning process, knowing what's coming ahead. As part of that planning process, I was able to show participants a map of the routes the week before we would walk that route. On the third route, that was going to be our mega challenge. I actually had a participant let me know that they would not be able to participate during that specific route because it had a very intense incline. She let me know why. It was because of a knee injury, so they were going to be in pain. They already knew that they were not going to participate.

There was no accommodation as far as could they use a mobility aid or something like that. It was just, "I'm not going to do it if this is the route." I was able to, again, pause and ask everybody, "How do we feel about this route?" Other participants voiced their concerns. Again, it was two more participants. Half of my participants by this time let me know that they were not going to participate in the walk.

As a last minute adjustment, I was able to say, "Okay, we're changing the route. We will do an easier at least no incline route that, again, we can still challenge ourselves with but there's going to be no incline." As a result of that specific change, we were able to get all six participants to engage in that final walk successfully. For me, I'm hoping that our participants felt heard,-

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[00:29:34] Cailin: -they felt important, I'm important enough to have made this decision with the team, also that they're valued as a participant.

[00:29:43] Tee: Another session from the CalFresh Forum that really piqued our interest was about engaging tribal communities.

[00:29:52] Colby: This one was with Cole Morales and Noelle DiSano from the Center for Healthy Communities in Chico, California.

[00:30:00] Tee: They shared some very interesting insights with us about the challenges and successes of working with tribal communities.

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[00:30:07] Colby: I was very interested to learn that there are actually about 28 unique tribes in the region in which they work. These 28 tribes make up about 14% of the total tribes in all of California, so they have a huge reach in their area.

[00:30:25] Tee: I totally agree. It was especially interesting to learn that engaging with tribal communities, being that they are sovereign nations within local US jurisdictions, they each have their own communities to govern and nurture.

[00:30:41] Colby: While this might seem like a challenge or a barrier, Cole and Noelle were not deterred by these complexities. They actually embraced it. I loved Noelle's story of showing up again and again to meetings and gatherings on the reservations. One of the elders even remarked, "Oh, you're here again." He was surprised by her commitment to meet with the tribe and tribal elders again and again and as many times as she needed until she gained their trust.

[00:31:12] Tee: Yes. As Cole said, and I absolutely love this quote and use it often, "One must move at the speed of trust." Let me say that again, one must move at the speed of trust.

[00:31:29] Colby: It makes so much sense once you think about it.

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[00:31:33] Colby: Here are Cole and Noelle talking about their experiences engaging local tribes in the Chico area.

[00:31:41] Noelle DiSano: I think it's important to recognize and address the unique challenges and contributions of our Native American communities, acknowledging their historical injustices, celebrating their cultural heritage, respecting their sovereignty while addressing their health disparities. I think increasing their visibility and representation can help combat stereotypes and promote a more accurate understanding of their contributions to society. Letting the tribes take the lead and working with them is essential to building strong relationships and gaining their trust, and just remembering that trust is earned and it's not given.

[00:32:21] Cole Morales: I believe that Noelle hit the nail on the head with that answer. When we look at working with our tribal communities, and just echoing what Noelle said, it's really important to acknowledge the historical history and the historical traumas that our tribes have been through, and understanding that there might be some mistrust that has occurred between different organizations.

One thing that's really ingrained in my brain whenever I think about working with tribes is moving at the speed of trust, and building that trust and building those relationships and providing the resources when we can and say, "How can we help? How can we really build these relationships to go into the future so that if there's anything that we can assist with, then we can?" Noelle hit it right on the head. Our tribes are unique and there's not one certain solution or one certain avenue that you should take in working with a tribe. That each tribe is special, each tribe is unique in that not one size fits all, and that all of our experiences with tribes might be different.

With this forum coming up, it's just a way to show how we have done working with tribes and really showing our experiences, but knowing that another organization or other folks might have different experiences working with tribes. I think looking at tribes and seeing how we can support and really build those trust relationships is huge. I think that when I work with different tribes, I'll think of that, how can I build this trust? How can I move at the speed of trust to be able to say, "Hey, we want to make sure that you all consulted and that if you need anything from us, please reach out."

I feel like I have that conversation all the time. It's always great to hear when tribes do reach out like, "Hey, I know you mentioned this thing about broadband," because we're really heavy in broadband for the North State planning. I'm like,-

[00:34:09] Colby: Oh, nice.

[00:34:09] Cole: -"Yes, let me connect you with one of our project managers. Let's ask these questions and see is there a way that we can tie in," or even with restoration projects. I think that that's something that I keep in my mind a lot. Sometimes I have to take that step back and be like, "Okay, let's go a little bit slower and let's see how we can help out more." Yes, I always like that.

[00:34:27] Colby: Love that.

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[00:34:33] Tee: For our final episode in the *Forum Highlight* series, we got to chat with Lina Nasr and Roberto Ramirez about their session, Innovative Strategies to Engage Low Income Older Adults in Creating Community Change.

[00:34:48] Colby: I wasn't exactly sure what to expect going into this interview, to be honest, but Lina and Roberto completely blew past any expectations that I could have had. They were so passionate about this work, and their drive really made anyone listening want to care more for our older adults.

[00:35:08] Tee: Absolutely. It was a great reminder about the wisdom and knowledge that older adults have.

[00:35:15] Colby: We even brought up some of the stereotypes that society has about the older generation. Lina was so quick to not only tell us, but show us examples of how the opposite is in fact true.

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[00:35:29] Tee: Yes. Here's Lina Nasr to share just a couple of those examples with you.

[00:35:35] Lina Nasr: Sometimes, as you're considering solutions to a barrier, you'll catch them. That's the cool thing about working with older adults, they can reminisce at how things used to be and how things used to be like. It used to be easier to do certain things. I'll ask, "What was it? Why can't we do that now?" We dissect components that made it possible back then, and we come up with ideas for how we

can make it happen today." This was a case in one of our groups. One of the older adults, she had lived all her life in Somalia and she was saying how she didn't like the taste of many fruits and vegetables anymore. That was a barrier.

Previously, in her country, she was used to always having access to that fresh produce because that's all really she had access to. She would eat from the land, she would drink fresh milk from a cow. Everything was just so fresh. She said there was no refrigerator and she couldn't access processed foods. It was too expensive or too far away. She explained how she missed that freshness of the food, and then it was cool. This was a very diverse group that we were working with at the time, but participants from Ethiopia who were also in the class were like, "Yes, totally. That's our experience too. We miss that freshness as well."

The conversation after that shifted to like, "What can we do here? How can we access fresh fruits and vegetables? Is there a garden? Is there anything nearby where we can either start up or is there something we can work with?" This was the conversation that really led to the motivation behind the group reaching out to a neighboring youth organization that ran an urban farm.

By connecting with this group, they have gained a space to garden at that garden and they are regularly provided with fresh produce from that urban farm. In gratitude, which is really neat also, is that the older adults have also invited the youth from that organization to come to their quarterly potlucks, which they're holding at their apartment. That's something really neat that happened.

In general, what I love about working with the older generation is that they have such valuable life experience, and you just have to tap them really to see all that they can offer. Sometimes we are just too busy running around and just doing what we are doing that we just don't tap them to see all that they can and are willing to offer. I can see how negative stereotypes can come up, but it's really an unfortunate thing as it's our loss when we don't really notice all that older adults can offer to our society.

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[00:37:49] Colby: With the forum done and concluded, all the sessions were amazing in person. Just by the way, there was one more organization that we wanted to shine the spotlight on located in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

[00:38:03] Tee: That's right. We ended Season 1 with a heavy hitter, Tulsa CARES. We sat down with Casey Bakhsh, Chief Program Officer. Tulsa CARES' mission is to provide services and compassionate care to folks who are low-income and living with HIV AIDS and or Hepatitis C.

[00:38:24] Colby: I truly loved every episode we did in Season 1, but there was something about chatting with Casey that really, really made me realize the importance of all we do here in the trauma-informed world.

[00:38:37] Tee: We focused on Tulsa CARES' Second Cup lunch program, a community lunch offering for staff, volunteers, and participants of Tulsa CARES.

[00:38:47] Colby: The detail and care that they put into that lunch in that program is amazing. Casey shed light on how easy it can be to meet people where they are at and the incredible importance of this. We don't need to put on an extravagant event to show people we care about them. Sometimes it's just as simple as sharing a meal.

[00:39:08] Tee: We decided to pair her interview up with the Meaning of Food in Life questionnaire by Naomi Arbit and colleagues. If anyone has taken the questionnaire, you'll know that there are a variety of ways in which we connect to food.

[00:39:23] Colby: The Second Cup lunch incorporates all of them, which is an amazing way to show their care for all of their diners and their relationships with food.

[music]

[00:39:34] Tee: Here's Casey to tell you about what it's like being a part of the Tulsa CARES and the Second Cup Lunch community.

[00:39:44] Colby: Can you tell me about the relationships that have developed among diners and with staff as a result of the lunch program?

[00:39:52] Casey Bakhsh: I think what's really fortunate about our community is we're more of a long-term community. We don't have a lot of people that go into care and then we don't see them six months later or three months later. We have long-term relationships because we're working with folks with chronic health conditions. I think you already have some barriers already addressed on how do you create these relationships where you get enough or understand enough of what's going on with the person to really help them with their quality life or help them move to what they would like to see for themselves.

I think this opportunity is really-- I can't express enough how amazing it is to create more meaningful relationships. It is so hard sometimes to do that when you're in your own case management office. I'm saying that as a case manager. You have somebody sitting across from you, you're trying to get paperwork, you don't want to do the paperwork either. You know it's just something you have to do, but you're on a timestamp and all of this. This gets them out of their office. They'll have a different hat on their head, they're enjoying food, which is great way to break down barriers because you're enjoying good food and you're having conversations.

I really think what's been phenomenal is our clients are such a tapestry of experiences, feelings, who they are as a self, their stories. They're just such gifts. When you're able to create an environment where you don't have all these expectations, you don't have to hurry up, you're not rushed, it really creates meaningful work. You really see the person and you see hope and you see the self-worth and how to help assist in the empowerment of them. I can't explain it. It's like you can see it. You see it the minute they walk in the door headed to the dining hall.

It's like their shoulders are relaxed. Woo, sorry about that. Sorry, let me take just a second. Their shoulders are relaxed and they know they're in a safe place and they know we're going to take care of them and we want to be a part of their family

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because they might not have one, or they might have lost it or they might be working through some stuff on their own. They know they can count on us. We don't feel it as luggage. We don't feel it as constraints. We feel it as value and we want to be there for that. I know that's so wild to say about a lunch event, right?

[laughter]

[00:42:15] Casey: You're you're like "Lady, you're talking about lunch here," right?

[00:42:19] Colby: [laughs] It's just lasagna.

[laughter]

[music]

[00:42:29] Tee: Oh, wow. What a season.

[00:42:33] Colby: Seriously. It was such a journey completing Season 1. It was like a crash course in podcasting for us. [laughs] Personally, I learned so much.

[00:42:46] Tee: Me too. We are going to take all of these lessons and keep on learning and growing into Season 2.

[00:42:55] Colby: That is absolutely right. We cannot wait to share what we have in store for Season 2 with all of you.

[00:43:03] Tee: More amazing community voices to highlight, more trauma-informed lessons to share, and more connections to be made.

[music]

[00:43:12] Casey: Thank you so much for joining us today. If any of what you have heard today piqued your interest, head back and enjoy what Season 1 has to offer.

[00:43:21] Tee: We'll be back next month with more fruitful conversations.

[00:43:25] Colby: Until then, ciao.

[music]

[00:43:30] Tee: This podcast is a product of Leah's Pantry made possible by the funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, the USDA, and their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, an equal opportunity provider and employer. Visit calfreshhealthyliving.org for healthy living tips. Thank you so much for hanging with us. I want to ask you this question, do you know of any thought leaders or someone doing great work in your community? We would love to interview them and we'd love to hear from you.

Find us online at leahspantry.org or on Instagram handle [@LeahsPantry](https://www.instagram.com/LeahsPantry), or email us at stockingthepantry@leahspantry.org. This podcast is a product of Leah's Pantry made possible by the funding from the United States Department of Agriculture and

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[music]

[00:44:34] [END OF AUDIO]