

Unsung Stewards

Jason, Tammy, Cyrrus, and Othello Podcast

TRANSCRIPT – Episode 2 | Season 3

[00:00:00] **Becky:** Welcome to Season 3 of *Unsung Stewards*, a podcast series presented by The Rippel Foundation. I'm Becky Payne, President and CEO of Rippel, which is dedicated to fostering equitable health and well-being. This series spotlights and celebrates individual stewards, people dedicated to working with others to create the conditions that everyone needs to thrive.

[00:00:24] At Rippel, much of the work we do is focused on guiding and inspiring stewards to expand the vital conditions for health and well-being. There are seven vital conditions representing the circumstances we all need in order to live full, healthy lives: basic needs for health and safety, humane housing, meaningful work and wealth, a thriving natural world, reliable transportation, lifelong learning, and, at the center of all of these, belonging and civic muscle. The vital conditions represent an approach to public health that goes beyond emergency response or disaster relief. When we focus on improving each of these conditions within a community, we have the power not only to prevent suffering, but to help every member of that community truly thrive.

[00:01:12] In Season 3, we're speaking with stewards of health and well-being around the country to hear about their work to expand the vital conditions in their communities. Today, I'm speaking with Tammy Fields, Jason McGill, and two young people who work with Jason, Cyrrus and Othello. Jason is the Executive Director of Northwest Youth Services in Washington State, an organization focused on fighting youth homelessness by dismantling the systems of oppression that perpetuate it.

[00:01:41] Tammy is the Director of Youth Services in Palm Beach County, Florida, and works to support the health of young people in her county in all aspects of their lives, particularly their mental and behavioral health. Both Jason and Tammy approached their work by thinking about how to expand the vital conditions that can help young people to thrive.

[00:02:01] I'm thrilled to be speaking with all of you. Tammy, Jason, Cyrrus, Othello, thank you so much for being here on the podcast. And I want to give you a chance to each introduce yourselves. I'm going to start with you, Cyrrus. I'm going to ask you to just introduce yourself, give us a little flavor of your background, and tell us about the work that you do and your life at this moment.

[00:02:24] **Cyrrus:** My name is Cyrrus. I work for Northwest right now under Jason. I've been a Bellingham native since I was a little kid. Moved up here from California, been a couple other places too, like Kentucky, Montana, I've been all around and this is home. I'm just very excited to get on this podcast and tell my story.

[00:02:44] **Becky:** Well, Othello, would you introduce yourself?

[00:02:47] **Othello:** Yeah, hi, I'm Othello, I'm a member of the Youth Action Board here. Primarily, our focus is improving on social services in our area. I grew up a little bit of everywhere. My family moved a lot when I was young, so nowhere has ever really felt like home, but Bellingham is as close as it gets, I think.

[00:03:08] I love it here, and I love the people here. I love doing what I can to make life a little bit easier for those who have been in poor situations. Yeah, I'm excited to be on the podcast.

[00:03:20] **Becky:** Jason, you've been instrumental in creating the circumstances that allow Othello and Cyrrus to feel what they're describing, to feel like this is home.

[00:03:29] So could you introduce yourself and share a little bit more about your work?

[00:03:33] **Jason:** Uh, yes, I'm really excited to be here as well, especially with these two individuals and Tammy, I think we'll get to know each other soon, but Jason McGill, I'm very proud to be the Executive Director of Northwest Youth Services, been in this role since February 1st of 2021, and anytime I do my introduction, I will always say this just because it was a very proud moment.

[00:03:53] But I am the first black executive director for Northwest Youth Services. I'm actually the first black executive director in Whatcom County for any organization. And that's like, you know, it's monumental for this area, for me personally, and just everyone who celebrates things like that.

[00:04:09] **Becky:** Thank you. Tammy, you bring a perspective all the way across the country, but in similar space with youth and youth services.

[00:04:18] Would you please introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your work?

[00:04:21] **Tammy:** Thank you, Becky, and thank you for the invitation to participate. I'm in Palm Beach County, Florida, and I am the director of the Palm Beach County Youth Services Department, which is a department of county government, and it's, uh, it's unique that a county government has devoted the time and resources and staff to having a department solely focused on our youth all the way from the age of zero to the age of 22.

[00:04:54] **Becky:** So I want to invite each of you to talk a little bit more about what brought you here. Othello, you shared some, but I want to hear a bit more about how you found yourself getting engaged. What brought you to this and the service that you devote your time, your effort, your energy, that could go to any number of things, but you choose to devote a significant part of your talent and your time to the Youth Advisory Board.

[00:05:24] Tell us a little bit about how you found yourself deciding to do that and what inspires you about it.

[00:05:31] **Othello:** It's a pretty rocky story to be honest. I ended up on my own at roughly 18 and I had to drop out. You know, it's, it's not super easy when you're young and like queer, but Northwest Youth Services became a, not really like just a home, but somewhere that I could find connection with like people who were like me, people who had gone through similar things, people who had bad relationships with their families, and it became my, my outlet for finding a new family.

[00:06:04] The social services in the area and all of the people who put their time and energy into social services in the area really kept me afloat and kept me like connected with the world around me in a time where I was so lost in my own head that like I can't remember most, most of the, those couple of years, and I just, I want to be a part of that.

[00:06:27] I want to, I want to give back to everyone and everything that gave back to me, and I want to help those who couldn't find that home. I feel like a lot of us get lost. If there's anything I can do to stop that or help some people out, I'm gonna do it.

[00:06:43] **Becky:** That's wonderful. I so appreciate the courage that it takes for all of you.

[00:06:49] You all, each of you has a unique story and pathway into this, and I honor the courage and the bravery it takes, not just to tell us this story, but for, um, for all of you to be turning your energy and ambition toward giving back. It's such an incredible, important, and beautiful thing to honor, and I thank you for that.

[00:07:12] Cyrrus, you've had an equally compelling and difficult, but also I know you describe it as very rewarding in some ways path to where you are today. I want to invite you to tell as much of that as you're comfortable with. I'm going to prompt you in particular, if you could share a little bit about the story of when you first met Jason.

[00:07:34] **Cyrrus:** Yeah, so, um, a little while ago, uh, sometime during the summer, I kind of decided to shift gears from just doing the normal stuff that I was doing. I had like all this ambition and all these plans and things, right? And I decided I wasn't going to just talk about it anymore, I was going to start doing these things.

[00:07:55] And that included, uh, like starting a clothing brand. And I had this idea for a fashion event that would kind of go hand in hand with that. And, uh, the clothing brand and the fashion event, like at the end of the day, were a chance for me to connect with the community and the community to connect with itself.

[00:08:14] And, um, I wanted to take a piece of the profits and go to, like, uh, the Northwest Youth Services, actually, and do, like, clothing pop-ups and give clothes back to homeless youth. And I had all these ideas and ambitions. Okay, so I was outside my building and, uh, where I stay, Jason's walking by, and I had no idea who he was.

[00:08:33] All I said was like, you look good today. He's like, okay, well, what's your name, young man, type stuff, and we get to talking and he knows me, and I'm like, Cyrrus, and he's like, oh, only good things. These are only good things I've heard. So that kind of just set me at ease. And then I told him I wanted to pitch these ideas to him because he said he was the executive director.

[00:08:53] I was like, this is the man in the jeans right here. So, uh, like about a week or two goes by and I meet up with him and he actually said, funny enough, he was looking for an intern from my building, someone to internship here. So I was like, that works like hand in hand. I think we could help each other out.

[00:09:11] And I work under him and we're working on doing my first drop for my clothing brand in December and then sometime around March having, uh, what I'm calling the fashion event. It's going to be called Fabricon. So think Comic Con, but with fabric and a little play on words. I don't know. I'm just so happy and grateful that in that moment I reached out to him and then here we are now just killing it.

[00:09:35] **Becky:** I love that. I love the theme that you're both bringing forward about these organizations and the people in the organizations who've created a space where you feel like you belong, and that for some reason you're both not stopping there, but you're both giving back of your time and your talent. Jason, I want to ask you a little bit more about that.

[00:09:53] You talk about the phrase, a pathway out of poverty, and I know that's really important and meaningful for you. I want to invite you to share a little bit more about kind of what that means, what that looks like, how you go about doing that, uh, and, and why it's so important.

[00:10:10] **Jason:** Yeah, thank you. I love this question.

[00:10:12] Um, yeah, I do have a passion for not just doing this work because in social services, we get in this cycle of just like providing basic needs, which is necessary, right? Like we need to make sure that people are getting their, their basic needs met, but we always talk about ending something, but we never take steps to end it.

[00:10:31] And I do believe that, you know, youth and young adult homelessness in Whatcom and Skagit counties, communities that we serve, Northwestern Services, we can actually end youth and young adult homelessness, meaning that whatever pathway that a young person is on at that age, we will have a place that will not just welcome folks, but to make sure that they're, they're safe and that they're not experiencing any nights outside.

[00:10:53] And, but to do that, it's, it takes a lot of effort, right? It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of, uh, funding. We're still building that. that platform or that pathway out of poverty. But if we're going to end youth and young adult homelessness, we need to figure out ways that's creating a pathway for young people to elevate out of poverty.

[00:11:09] And that can look various ways, depends on who the individual is. To do that, it's tapping into young people's passions. You heard these two incredible, um, humans right here that are talking about their passions. And so then what can we do as an organization to tap into that or to help manifest that or curate that, that passion in a, in a way that's elevating them out of their situation, not just them, but other young people who are coming behind them.

[00:11:33] And, you know, it could be creative ways. I do believe in. creative engagement. I think that's a really good intervention to use with young people to kind of like start their healing journey. Um, and that's just young people, humans in general. So that's one avenue. Um, another one is like, how do we, you know, we're in capitalism, right?

[00:11:51] The system is not getting reformed or dismantled, dismantled anytime soon. Um, so how can we take advantage of that in a way that's also elevating young people out of their situation and not just them, but their bringing, or there, there are folks that are coming behind them as well. I mean, that's building equity, right?

[00:12:07] Building how can we promote ownership, um, with young people so that they can purchase their own unit, condo, whatever it is that's helping them build their equity, which is again, a pathway out of poverty. Uh, that's stuff that we're still working on, figuring out how to actually do that. You know, that could be co-op living.

[00:12:24] It can be a land with a tiny home on it, whatever it is, um, that makes sense. That's what we want to do. So yeah, it starts with healing, but healing starts with passion. Like how do we activate that passion and whatever that looks like for that individual, that's what we want to help provide.

[00:12:39] **Becky:** It's so powerful.

[00:12:40] And Tammy, I know even all the way across the country, you share some themes and commonality with what they're doing in Bellingham, and I want to invite you to share a little bit more about your own journey and coming to this work and the realizations about trauma and healing through that trauma and how you approach the role, the unique role that your organization holds in service of and in partnership with youth.

[00:13:11] **Tammy:** I'll start by saying I, um, have a lot of admiration and respect for Cyrrus and Othello, that they've come to this work at this point in their lives. I'm 60-something and so I'm coming to it a little bit later, probably accidentally on purpose that I came to this work. Uh, I was in the county attorney's office, um, I'm a licensed attorney and was in that office for 25 years and the department was created and they were looking for the director of the department.

[00:13:45] And here I am as the director of the department. But one of the things that happened very early on is I was introduced to the concept of adverse childhood experiences, what we all call ACEs. And I really had never heard about it, wasn't aware of all of the factors that can affect you for a long time in your life.

[00:14:06] And I really think that I was brought to this position for myself as well as what I could do to help in the community because I'm one of those people who have a very high ACE score. And I had just gone through cancer treatments, um, not the best of divorces, and it was the right time for me to be in this position.

[00:14:32] It allowed me to learn about myself, factors that led me to have some resilience, including a teacher who really had an influence very early on, and allowed me to bring my experiences forward to others. where I could identify with the young people that we work with. And what's been so great is because I had so much experience within the county, also be able to collaborate with so many of our community partners.

[00:15:06] We have something in Palm Beach County called Birth to 22, which is actually a collaboration of over 300 youth-serving organizations in our county. And we're able to work together to fill different gaps. And one of the things that Jason just mentioned was that creative gap. We recently were doing some community conversations with young people.

[00:15:30] Mental health is an issue. We want to have the availability of mental health resources, but we don't need therapy all of the time. We need to be able to express ourselves. We need to be able to write or sing or dance or paint or rap or whatever it is they need to do. We need to have places where we can experiment and discover our passions and be able to move forward in a safe space.

[00:15:58] So often I think young people, um, that want to go out for a sports team, they had to start when they were five on a t-ball team, um, in order to make a team and they don't have those

opportunities always to explore different avenues. And that's what we've been hearing from young people is let us explore.

[00:16:18] Let us be creative. Let us try and fail because failure is really not failing. It's just trying something, finding out whether you like it. If you don't try something else, but not having a situation where every child needs to know what they're going to do with their life by the time they're in middle school.

[00:16:37] And so that's one of the things that we try to promote.

[00:16:42] **Becky:** So there's a theme in what each of you has shared related to kind of how powerful and important either listening to the young people you come into contact with or having been listened to along the way in your journey where Othello and Cyrrus are concerned.

[00:16:59] And Cyrrus, I'm going to come back to you for a minute because I know when we spoke previously, you have a very particular perspective on what young people need and what that relates to in terms of opening up space to be heard and be yourself and what the, you know, adults and we'll say well-intentioned institutions do and don't do that helps give you that space.

[00:17:22] So can you talk a little bit more about what it means to be listened to, what it really looks and feels like, and how you've experienced that and what did that do for you?

[00:17:34] **Cyrrus:** Yeah, I personally feel like as a teenager or going into my adulthood being homeless for three years and being on the streets, seeing the way people treated me based on the way I looked or based on what I had, kind of shaped my ability to do with what I had or to change my circumstance and I feel like just being, going from that position to this, I want to be able to actually give people like what I call a hand up instead of a hand out because I feel like a hand up is raising you out of your situation and that's exactly what Jason did for me, and there's a kind of a thin white line between yourself and everyone else, and when you are able to bridge that gap and kind of dissolve the line yourself I kind of like, I see it as, what can you do for yourself, but at the same time viewing everyone else equal?

[00:18:30] Because when I wasn't being viewed as equal, I could physically feel it. Like I could see it, I could hear it, people's tones as they walked by, you know, stuff like that. Um, just being out there in the world with no direction. And sometimes you need direction, you need people to be able to be that beacon for you.

[00:18:47] Or like, give you hope. And, a lot of times I just felt like I was doing what I could to get by instead of like to get on my feet. And, uh, organizations like this one and, uh, the other ones that we've mentioned so far are kind of like those beacons, uh, to a lot of people. It's up to the person at the end of the day. And it's also up to other people to be able to extend that hand. And I personally, like, once I was housed, I got really comfortable.

[00:19:13] And then something, like, woke me up one day and I was like, Oh, well all these different resources and all these different people are really trying to help me. I might as well see where that goes. And, uh, here we are. Thank God.

[00:19:27] **Becky:** Othello, you have a particular perspective, and I think an outlet that is really powerful in this as well.

[00:19:36] Can you share with me a little bit more about the work that you're doing with the Youth Action Board, talking to policymakers and helping them understand the way they need to change things to help you.

[00:19:50] **Othello:** So the Youth Action Board is, the number count tends to fluctuate a lot, but we generally sit between, like, four to 10 different people there at any given time.

[00:20:04] A lot of the newer members coming in are homeless and impoverished, like, kids in high school. I think our primary goal as a group is to bring these people who feel like they have no control over the lives that they're living and the help that they're receiving, and give them a better sense of understanding of the programs going on around them.

[00:20:29] Because something that we've all kind of noticed in receiving help is that it almost feels like, like the great fairy coming in and making things better, but you don't really know how or where or what's going on to make that happen. And a lot of that is, like, strained communication, I think. Um, it is, it's hard to keep in contact when you're, when you don't know where you're going to be sleeping that night.

[00:20:58] But a, a much bigger part of it, something that we've been trying to delve into more recently, is actually changing the systems that aren't quite working to benefit us. A good example is Northwest Youth Services has a, a site to offer housing to kids under 18. And it's, it's great. It's a wonderful, wonderful resource.

[00:21:26] But it's been kind of messy. It's, it's hard to keep a bunch of Kids who are like stuck in fight or flight to get their lives together. So we were given this, we as in the Youth Action Board were given this packet of information about the rule system and like, a ranking system, and the idea was there, but it was very Institutional, it felt very clinical, it felt very easy to abuse when we were first reading through it.

[00:22:01] And so we, we brought that to their attention. Uh, we had a full, like, hour-long conversation about what was wrong, what could be fixed and why the initial paperwork was the way that it was. A lot of those steps are being put into place. You know, it's still not perfect even after we went through and talked about it, but it's relieving to know that the people who say they care and are putting the work in, like actually do care and are willing to change what is perceived to be a mistake.

[00:22:36] **Becky:** Thank you for that. Um, Jason, I want to invite you to share a little bit more behind the curtain or some of the other approaches and the philosophy behind the way you engage with the young adults and youth who you are working with and who come through, you know, your path. This idea that they have a voice, um, that you've given some structure and support to that voice and the starting point isn't your word or the institution's word, but the starting point for you and the services, which almost seems too sterile, but for lack of a better term, the services that you support them with and the connections out into resources that you support them with.

[00:23:17] That's just a beginning point. So can you say a little bit more about why and how and the longer view of what you believe you're building with, with these young adults?

[00:23:30] **Jason:** Yeah, I love that question. Um, what Othello and Cyrrus just described is what I truly believe. And that is like, young people have power, have agency.

[00:23:39] Um, it's just, how do we bring that out, right? And that's, again, goes back to that passion conversation we had earlier that Tammy was mentioning as well. Yeah, the Youth Action Board is a beautiful process of ensuring that young people have their voices included in everything that we do. You know, we don't have the luxury of having other service providers doing this similar work in our community.

[00:24:01] It's really just us, so we need to make sure that we bring young people into the process of designing and elevating, not the organization, but just themselves, but being a part of a larger movement. And I actually talk about that all the time with, uh, the staff here is when we hire staff and I meet them for the first time, I always say welcome, because the movement includes young people and it has to include young people.

[00:24:23] And that's the only way that we can actually end homelessness, right? Creating this movement together. So I do think there is a lot of value in making sure that we have a platform that young people can voice their concerns over whatever the design of the program is, but then taking that feedback, putting action to it.

[00:24:40] You know, we talk a lot about anti-racism work here, um, and the difference between DEI and anti-racism, and we've kind of dismantled the whole DEI thing because there's no action behind that. We want to put action behind what we say we're going to do. Why have a mission if we're not going to live up to it?

[00:24:56] You know? I truly believe that. And again, we can't do this without having the people that we're serving being a part of that process. So, I definitely believe and agree with everything that Othello was saying that, especially at our adolescent shelter at that site. It was feeling institutionalized and, but, you know, as service providers, we're just trying to go through the motions, right?

[00:25:18] And just, you know, keep, let's keep pushing. But once we heard that feedback, it was like, Oh, yeah, you're absolutely right. Let's change that. So that's what we're doing, is changing that. But we would not have probably landed on that this early if it were not for a platform like the Youth Action Board. I mean, having those brilliant minds coming together and saying, actually, let's do this instead, or, or we recommend this.

[00:25:41] **Becky:** So Tammy, I know you have leaned very heavily into trauma-informed approaches. And that whole approach to the work that you do, and this notion that it's not, my gosh, what did you do, but what has happened to you as a starting point. So could you say a little bit about how this plays out in your community?

[00:26:03] **Tammy:** Certainly. This one might be a little bit longer answer. Our Youth Services Department is certified in the Sanctuary Model of Trauma Informed Care. It took three years for us to

be able to get that certification for the entire department. But we found that it was a really important step for us to take.

[00:26:25] And it benefits both our clients as well as our employees. One of the things I think, uh, Jason will probably agree, and I think Cyrrus and Othello are, are testaments to, is many people who are drawn to social service work or, or youth-related work are ones who have experienced trauma themselves. And so we need to recognize that amongst all of our employees.

[00:26:51] And so the model is, is very deliberate. We have commitments, um, under the model, open communication being one of those very strong commitments. But then we also use it with all of the clients that we serve. Our department has a few different divisions. We do a lot of. work in the area of making sure that there's summer camp scholarships, um, and that there's funding opportunities for many of the agencies in our area.

[00:27:19] We've got a girls coordinating council, we've got My Brother's Keeper, but then we also have a large portion of the department that provides mental health services. One of the things we find very important is that we make sure that we're taking in students who are pursuing careers in the mental health area as our interns and, and our fellows.

[00:27:41] And so we have a lot of, um, training programs within the department. I would love to say that we would be able to stop any young person from experiencing trauma, but that's not reality. So what we have to be able to do is look at how do we give people tools to deal with trauma and how do we give people tools to build resiliency?

[00:28:11] No matter how hard we try, we're not going to stop all of the trauma. So we need to have coping mechanisms. Every one of my employees carries around a coping plan. So if they're triggered by, by something during the course of the day and they need to step back, um, they've got a coping plan. And sometimes we recognize it in each other as well, that someone is stressed.

[00:28:35] Maybe you want to check out your coping plan for a minute. We also provide those same tools for all of the young people that we work with, as well as their families. It's very hard to say, we really don't want to take the approach of here's my kid, my kid's got something wrong with them, fix my kid, let me know when you're done, and we'll come back and pick him up.

[00:28:57] That doesn't work. We need to make sure that we're working with family structures while family structures are still in place. And then we also have programs that if the family structure is already not in place, we help it at that level as well. But many parents have experienced trauma too. And so we need to give the parents tools so that they can recognize how they're affecting their children when they're reacting to their own trauma.

[00:29:26] So it's really very much of a circle and our key of what we're always trying to do is build resilience. And I think what, um, Cyrrus and Othello were, were referring to of having their own agency, their, their own power, their own voice, you can't tell someone, this is how you solve your problem, if you're not having that engagement.

[00:29:51] What is it you want to accomplish? What are the things that work for you? You know, listening to music may work for one person, but another person might want to take a few moments

and take a walk, um, or punch a punching bag. Whatever it may be, you need to allow people to develop their own coping mechanisms,

[00:30:12] their own plan for where they want to get to, and then just be able to check in along the way of how is that plan going? How are your coping skills working? Do you need to make some changes along the way? Life changes all of the time and what works one day may not work the next day, but have the ability to make those changes and move forward.

[00:30:41] **Becky:** I want to give each of you just a moment to share, and Tammy, we'll start with you and then go back to Bellingham. What is one thing that gives you hope in this work?

[00:30:52] **Tammy:** I think one of the things that gives me the most hope is engaging with young people who want to change the trajectory for themselves and for future generations.

[00:31:05] A lot of trauma is very cyclical and so when you see a young person who wants to change and wants to make sure that that doesn't happen when they have kids and families going forward and are really enthusiastic about engaging and making plans and, uh, I take a lot of encouragement from our interns.

[00:31:32] I'm very proud of bringing in interns into our department because I see them creating lifelong careers after they've served as a student intern. And so just watching that is what gives me hope for the future. When I get to, to meet young people like Cyrrus and Othello, that gives me hope. I, I'm on the tail end of this career and they're just starting out and they give me hope.

[00:32:02] **Becky:** Well said. Cyrrus, Othello, what gives you hope in this moment? ?

[00:32:08] **Othello:** This probably isn't, like, the answer you're looking for, but I give myself hope. I think hope is a discipline. It's what keeps me running. It's hard to find hope out here. Like, things suck, but things can change, and they're slow, and they're painful, but they can change.

[00:32:30] So having hope kind of just feels like the least I can do.

[00:32:35] **Cyrrus:** So I'm going to try to not sound like as generic as possible. So what gives me hope? What gives Cyrrus hope? Just knowing that at the end of the day, there were people in my position beforehand that I could also elevate to my position now, you know, there's, I'm not the only person that feels the way I do.

[00:32:53] And there's plenty of people not only my age, but maybe older, that really just have these ideas and these ambitions and they want to change and I think that I could be that light in those people's lives or at least be something for my family to strive towards or just, you know, what gives me hope, a number of things, but at the end of the day, that is just like the start.

[00:33:15] Jason gives me hope, Othello gives me hope, uh, people who are ready to do what I'm doing now, all that kind of stuff. Also people like you, for giving me an outlet and just, you know, young people's voices need to be heard and I'm forever grateful for you guys for this opportunity.

[00:33:31] **Becky:** Jason, what gives you hope?

[00:33:34] **Jason:** Um, yeah, this is a great question.

[00:33:36] Um, like Cyrrus just said, so many things and what Othello said. You're so spot on, Othello, like, you have to also give yourself hope. I don't think people look at it like that. Um, but the one thing that I will name in this is what gives me hope, um, right now is knowing that our younger generations are becoming conscious to the system, how it operates, because we all know that it needs to change.

[00:33:59] Uh, when I talk about the system, I truly am talking about capitalism because it others people, right? It creates this like division and just this competition that we don't need. We're not built as humans to be like always competitive against each other. That's not our purpose. So what definitely gives me hope is hearing these two individuals, um, speak their truth and also becoming conscious to the system.

[00:34:23] **Becky:** Thank you. I can genuinely say that people like each and every one of you give me hope and being able to share stories, be entrusted with your stories and share your stories is such a wonderful gift. I thank you. I am so encouraged by the work that you're doing. And more than the work that you're doing, the way each of you approaches the work that you're doing is so inspiring.

[00:34:46] And I'm so grateful that we get to share all of this with other people. So thank you. Thank you for listening to this episode of *Unsung Stewards*. I want to thank today's guests for joining us and for all the work they do to improve the lives of the communities they serve. I'd also like to thank the team that makes this podcast possible, including Molly Belsky, Teri Wade, Brad Girard, Amanda McIntosh and Laila Hussain. I'm your host, Becky Payne, President and CEO of The Rippel Foundation. To learn more about our guests and their work, please refer to the links and information on our website at www.rippel.org. R I P P E L dot org. We hold deep gratitude for those who've been willing to share their stories with us.