1013\_McCaffrey\_Living Waters\_Dan Hunter\_Kristin Smith

I: Before we actually start this formal interview, we're actually talking about Meadville and its musings. Can we start out with just a generic question, such as: what is so distinctive about Meadville? How does it emerge in your lived experience here? And why is that important to you?

R: It's kind of hard to digest those three parts because thinking about Meadville--it's home. So to me, why it's important: it's where my family is, it's where my friends are, it's where I am. So it's just part of who I am now at this point. I don't know if that's answering my three parts, but that's kind of my...

R: I think it's easy because most of us have left at some point and we have chosen to come back. And we all have families and it's very easy to have a family here because of the resources that we value. We know our kids are safe with other agencies and other groups and sports and other groups that they're associated with. Like I have no fears when my son is not right next to me because I know that it's a community based with values. So, that's what we like about Meadville and we see that emerging more so with Kristin's outreach and with, ya know what I mean, those things that are popping up that have similar values.

I: There's a general feeling of safety, home.

R: Right. It's a great region to be in. There's a diversity of weather, and there's mountains and there's lakes, so if you're into outdoor stuff there's a lot of things all season to do. There's, ya know, you can ski or you can sled ride, there's hills everywhere, there's lakes for boating or swimming, bike trails. All kinds of different stuff like that where you can get the community together and go out and go for a bike ride. Ya know, different things like that and just like with our side walk kids, we do that during the summer and we are able to get out and do different things with the kids. We are able to have water balloons and just fun activities for them. And I tell people a lot of times, I really love the diversity of weather because once you're sick of one type of weather, it changes to another type of weather (other person: sometimes in the same week). And some days it goes from summer to winter, and um I just love that about the community. Plus we're really close to a lot of places. If you do wanna go to the big city, we're not very far from Pittsburgh, we're not very far from Erie, Niagara Falls, a lot of bigger cities are only a couple of hours away.

R: I really think the things that are in the larger cities can be found here if you dig in and you're connected. We have state of the art medical facilities, we have high end colleges and education, opportunities, ya know, we have all of those pieces available if you get connected and seek it out. It's here, you just have to get connected to it. There's no point in, I don't think there's a big push to drive out of the Meadville area to seek education when we have how many public and private and charter schools right here in the small radius. (other R: a lot to pick from). Right, and then we have major colleges, we have Allegheny, Edinboro right at our finger tips (other R: right, Grove City's not very far away...Slippery Rock).†

I: And what, Jeremiah says we say also is you don't have to pay for a lot of these amenities, they're just there. Whereas in a big city, you might have to pay admission charges or products that you have to buy in order to include the experience, baseball games, popcorn, whatever, you can get to enjoy this environment without having to pay extra money for it. Close to big cities also, so you don't have a culture desert. You still have access to performances, music, restaurants, Erie and Grove City, Pittsburgh's not that far away.†

R: The science center, we went to the aquarium in Cleveland for an overnight during the summer and it was beautiful. We went there we saw it and it was great, and we came home. So it's close enough to go to a jaunts to see something bigger than what Meadville has to offer, but it's not where I wanna live every day (other R: same thing, with Pittsburgh I'm like I'm alright.. I'll go there but would I wanna live there? No).

R: I feel safe there.

I: And you don't even have to take a hotel, you get down there it's 90 miles away. 90 to Buffalo, 90 to Pittsburgh, 90 to Cleveland.†

R: Yeah, ya know we're like right in the center.

I: Okay, so um, also I hear that you have state of the art education facilities, medical facilities in town so that also has access to things that would otherwise cost you because you don't have to go out of town for, you don't have to pay extra for, and you can trust your family is all taken care of. Let me ask you a question, this just occurred to me. Do you think other people know as well as you guys know what these advantages are and if not how do you get that out to them that these are the advantages of Meadville?

R: I honestly think they know, but they don't think about it or, ya know, you hear people break about Meadville, ya know, there's nothing to do. There actually is, if it was in front of them they'd probably know more. But I mean, it's not really put in front of them.

I: So I know what Dan does and what Christian does. Not yet quite sure what Jeremiah and Mike do. So tell me more about that. What do you do for a living?

R: Oh I have a carpet cleaning business.

I: Okay, so you're in the business world also?

R: Auto repair.

I: Auto repair. So that means you are entrepreneurs, so you are more not aggressive, but firm on finding out what's in your community--what you can contribute to as well as what can contribute back to you. So you're a little bit more pro-active maybe than some other people in the community about those things, do you agree?

R: Mhm.

I: So, i'm just curious having this particular group here. How would you do an educational program for other people in your community who don't partake in these things or know that these advantages are there?

R: It's interesting because it's a lot of what I'm doing, and in the early childhood realm is trying to connect parents to resources for parents to be their child's first teacher. And trying to say 'hey, did you know that this is out there, this is out there, this is out there' and many people don't know. Um, there really isn't one set way that is going to work for everyone.

R: It's word of mouth and networking, it's just basic communication. There are great resources like the MOPS program, and things like that, where women can get together and the preschoolers are all doing their child play but the moms have a chance to connect and say 'I use this resource, or I use that' and connect further in that capacity.†

I: What organization is that?

R: MOPS--Mothers of Preschools.

I: That's great because when they get kids it can make them more isolated being at home, doing the carework, so it brings them into a community of their own group. That's great. And you are out there, in a mobile capacity, getting the information out there.

R: Yeah, just from being an information hub and distributor. So people will come and say 'well what do I do for preschool, where do I apply? what can I be doing when my child has this issue with speech, who do I go to?'. So we're just kind of saying for this you go here, for this you go here, for this you go here. And I think that that's very necessary in some aspects because transportation is an issue in Meadville. Intercity transiency between 23 and 25% move from year to year. That was the stat, I think it was 2013\. So these people that are moving and moving and moving, so not only are they uprooting and maybe moving across town, but the resources will change based on where they're at and their availability and access to them. So creating some sort of access points, a lot of it happens on Facebook, a lot of it happens online.

R: That's where we come in as well with Living Waters because we go to the areas that don't have transportation for large families and we bus to church, so we provide that transportation but we're totally relationship based, so when they move from one housing complex to another housing complex or get evicted. We're relationship based and advocate based in how to navigated those forms that are overwhelming based on education, or how to navigate funeral planning because of addiction issues. Ya know what I mean, we have a lot of things where we're standing in that gap. We can talk a lot about the negative that we see with our poverty stricken families but there's a lot of good happening now that we're in that gap and we see how we can help. Like we can totally hold their hand and get them to school for Kristin, ya know what I mean? That's what we needed to do was stand there, find them, and hold their hand so they can just jump that hurdle that they didn't know how to get over. They were truly stuck. So that's what our biggest goal is is relationship based and then push them literally. And then we run life with them. We don't just drop them, we run life with them.

R: Without that relationship they're not going to be as open or wanting to listen or even accept help because without that relationship there's a divide and a separation.

I: Right, for sure. They're probably more used to being let down, they're not as trusting.

R: Right, and if we tell them something it's so important that we follow through with that. Like there was a kid with his tire on his bike was flat. Okay, I'm gonna get you a tire and stuff, so if we just say that and don't do anything, that's just gonna be a kid who somebody else has let me down, somebody else promised me something and didn't do anything. And that's just completely destroys the relationship and the trust and the everything. So when we say something, we have to do something. And that's just how you build that relationship. And just consistency, going and going and going and not just going there once or twice, but continually showing up and...

I: And then proving it and then proving it again.. it gets into where they finally learn to trust and they rely on that.

R: Right, because like ya know, they have so many people who let them down, who have walked out of their lives, who have promised them things and didn't do anything and just and they are so used to that.

R: And that relationship like I said turns multi-faceted. We develop it strongly with the people we work with but then we start turning it to the agencies that we want to connect them with. So we have to be aware of what's available in town, what going places†13:16†(indecipherable) will do and different schools. So I need to be able to have a relationship in every direction that maintaining the family that I'm working with.†

I: I can see the webbing happening.

R: It's a spider web, yeah, and it's starting to happen. So it's building trust with the families and the people we want to get the information, but it's also that next layer of (other R: what do we do with it? where does it go?) relationships between groups and people like us who are really trying to help other people in Meadville enjoy it in the way that we enjoy it.

R: We are helping people, but we all need to know about that, that's how you can grow. It's not just that you get a little help, and showcase that is exactly what we're doing. And just real quick, and you can hear it, everyone can hear 'what, oh no yeah the trailer' or 'oh yeah no I see the big trailer', they have a giant connect four. Those are the things people remember and that safety feature involved with trustworthy people, especially with you're not letting them down because they are let down a lot.

R: They are. And like Jeremiah's example the little boy needed the tire, that's a single mom situation. I don't know how many guys she may have dated that made those false promises to this little six year old. So it's so very important that we have males in our ministry that can show a positive, loving, supportive, ya know what I mean? All of those things that we value in our husbands and our sons, those great values they don't see sometimes. So we definitely showcase and highlight..

R: Kids are a product of their environment. If they're not shown that you're gonna keep promises and do what you say you're gonna do, it becomes a way of life and it's a ripple effect. It continues with their kids.

R: And their trauma.

(got their pizza)

I: It occurred to me when these people are shifted around from one agency to another, maybe some different housing to another, they lose their networks, and then they're isolated so many other ways emotionally but secondly, transportation wise.†

R: Otherwise they're just dangling.†

R: Sources of trauma, yeah.

R: Their guardian, whoever's in charge..

R: They're in fight or flight mode all the time and they're often angry. Some of the people that I work with because they're on the defense. They think I'm gonna come in there judgey because I'm the church lady. But once we approach them with love and consistency, and politely nudging, maybe not pushing them to a standard that I know they can hold, then they start responding appropriately. But they are dangling, they're just waiting for somebody to help or push or do something.

R: So it's not their fault, it's really not.

R: It's not. It's a lot of circumstances.

I: Are there.. It sounds like the churches in some way are a resource. Maybe public agencies aren't always able to absorb or provide for. How would you create a commonality among the efforts between the churches? Is that a viable, long term goal?

R: At any other given church, they've gotta have an out reach. I was driving up to the State Street (indecipherable†17:27†) right across from Kwik Fill. They have what looked like a pop-up activity, it wasn't like a BBQ or fundraiser, it was something for the community but it didn't seem like it was pushed. That was like in June or something I saw that. And it looked like they were trying, so they ultimately had a youth group, it looked like, there was a lot of kids. They were trying something. I don't know if it worked or not or what the whole deal was with it but you talk to them, I think pull some things and not always do it together but maybe once a month, pull your dues together or something.†

R: I know earlier this summer there was the ten days of prayer in the Diamond, the center piece of the town, and all pastors were invited to that and they each spoke on topic a different night and it was an open prayer for the community. And they had guest speakers, they had cancer doctors from the cancer center come in and pray quite boldly in the center of Meadville and other churches were there supporting each church and the community at large. And there was no discrimination, there was no bigotry, there was no issue with that. So there are catholics, or methodists, or unitarians in a central place with a central goal to pray for the city and how great it can be.

R: Have you done any since then?†

R: There's pastor breakfast and there's, coming up soon, is another gathering for the pastors.

R: Do they do the outreach once they eat dinner or approach the community or?

R: That's the goal. But I don't know, I'm not privy to that I'm not the pastor.

R: I'm speculating what they're gonna do, I don't think they're gonna get done in the breakfast and go out and do something for the community. Alright so if you took your people from the Diamond and you already met those people, maybe three of you, and then try it again but not in that central location which is central but I'm not coming out, there's nowhere to park. Ya know all these weird little things. So because you could do a quick neighborhood thing, you have trust with a lot of those neighborhoods so maybe you would be the person that you would contact two or three more churches and do it down fifth or Asbury, that beautiful playground, those are the hot spots. That would give you those A, B, C, D's and get you right through but you could always be invited in your situation with what you're doing with the literacy in each and every one of those neighborhoods. Not just the Diamond, not just the Market House, where there's a typical group that would go to that, typical place to the typical centralized--whoop-de-doo. Let me go in the gazebo. So let's think about this here for one second. It's a big city and even though it's a smaller one, but it's big because it kinda like has to be--I heard flood plane was how it was described. So it has to be over here, that neighborhood, this neighborhood, where we're sitting now. Down there. But then it goes up all the way to the top. Conneaut St. is a totally different neighborhood, so but it all comes right down where we have this wide open space, but there's some city parks. But then you have another city across Spring St. for crying out loud. It's pretty much bigger than Saegertown, as I was kind driving past my mom's and Saegertown, I'm thinking this is roughly the size from down by H & H down to old middle school or where the railroad tracks where I grew up down in the creek. It's not that big, it's like down Lincoln Ave. So that's its own little town, but I was able to go and hide a rose and nobody was planning on that particular playground but Lincoln Ave. is jammed. But no one was at that one. Then there's this brick schoolhouse in the back of it. That's my idea, simply you know those people, I betcha they would do anything. That'd be perfect.

R: Microcommunities. They're different areas and that's their unit, that's their neighborhood, that's their spot. What you were saying with churches is similar to my experience with the agencies. There are various agencies in Meadville which help families with different things that may arise in their family life. There's the center for family services, there are CHAPS, there are women's services. There are so many different agencies. But they're so focused on what they need to do that they become really siloed. So that we have these beautiful silos and what I'm trying to do is build bridges between silos. So that we can kind of start working together and see if I do this part and take this part of the pie, and you do this part of the pie, we don't all have to make a whole pie every single time. We can make a quarter of a pie and come out with a pie that's better than if I would've made it myself. So it's starting to happen. But what said before is trust, they're has to be trust. And until we have that trust built with the organizations that are doing this, so organizations are gonna have to come out of their silos and say 'hey you can trust us because of this. now check out our pie, we want you to be part of it too'.†

I: Two quick comments. First of all, the city is only 13,000 people. We can pull together. Secondly, lots of grants when you look at the grant requirements, they love collaborations between agencies, between entities, and so you're gonna generate more funding dollars that way because they support it.†

R:†23:47†

I: That's fascinating. I wasn't sure if that was true, I suspected it wasn't and I went to the CCCC one time, where all those agencies were kind of present. Crawford county community council.

R: Crawford county coordinating because there's the LICC, local inter-agency coordinating council. There's so many acronyms you get lost in the jargin. So let alone, that's ostracizing and marginalizing itself if you can't roll with the jargin. So here we are throwing all these acronyms and we can talk shop with different people and it's just getting everyone together for the common good. And if one church knew what another church was doing and they could do it together and then split their efforts and go into the micro communities and make our web bigger, really that's what we're talking about.

I: I'm gonna do something bold here, because I think that's really fascinating what you just brought up. So I'm gonna pull in Dan and Mike for a second just because they're entrepreneurs in the community and I just wanna hear how you get into those micro communities within those larger communities. But you're here for a reason Mike, I know you, I know this guy's energy, I feel your energy. You got a really good, benign energy there. So you've come for a reason. So how do you guys see the larger picture? I'm just curious. I'm not sure if the question is 'what brought you to me?', but what brought you to this level of commitment to (25:29†. I know Dan's story a little bit, but what gives you the hope that you can leverage some change here in Meadville, or what brings you to the table?

R: For me it's kids. I mean honestly, Dan brought me into this. I'd only been at my location for a few months now and I lived towards where the block party was, that's where my business is. And I see them kids walk by everyday. I have kids of my own, I've always had a soft spot for kids. It's not the kids' fault they are where they are. And I'm not saying they're all bad, they're far from it. I'm sure there's wonderful parents, but when you have kids that are just left to run free, kids get in trouble, and I just like seeing the kids do well.

I: That's beautiful. Hold that thought. Now what we're doing Jeremiah is sort of going to the entrepreneur side, so in sort of a male aspect. The question is going back to what asked originally, how we got the churches to some state of commonality and Kristin said something about how do you get churches to get into these subcultures within Meadville, all the subcultures have gone into the center, so asking you guys as entrepreneurs and males, what brings you to the table? What's your hope? What's your dream to the new Meadville kind of...what's your axis point? So Mike said kids, so he said a lot of kids go by his store.

R: Obviously with us and our church and stuff we are in the children's ministry and we do sidewalk Sunday school, which during the summer we go into the lower housing income communities and set up a truck during the week and teach a Sunday school lesson. We have a big game where we play a huge game and have fun and everything, and we do a small bible lesson with scripture based off of the game. So ours is definitely kids and we love kids and we have a motto kind of thing where there's not bad kids, just bad parents. Bad parenting. And that's why we go in there, and like I was saying earlier when we tell the kids we're gonna do something we do that. Even if it's something as simple as candy bar. 'Hey if you remember this lesson, we'll get you a candy bar next week if you remember that.' And then if we go there and don't have a candy bar and they're like 'hey I remembered this!', then your word is pointless.

R: Also, growing up you either do what you saw or you do what you wanted. You can all reflect on your parents. You either model your parents identically or you go the other extreme. They either did a really good job or they did a really bad job and you go the other way. So he's gonna do this to be the male that he thinks these kids need to see because they're not seeing males in their community. You see the kids walk by your shop. There's not a lot of dads walking them by. (other R: there's not a lot of parents walking them by). There's not a lot of parents on a very public street. There's not a lot of males that come to your booths, correct?†

R: It's probably more moms, it would just depend. Sometimes the men come over because there are toys that occupy the child. I think it would be more of a toss up, it would depend on the day and the place.†

R: Thank you Kristin for speaking up for the male race.

R: Yeah. There are plenty of involved dads in certain community settings, and the places we're going have been since we're still building trust have not been the places where you guys are doing sidewalk church. We're not there yet, we haven't built trust to get there.

R: So what brings him (Jeremiah) is he's going to be the male that he craved seeing, whether he saw that or not, he's going to make that available to the town because some kids don't have that and it's not their fault.†

R: And the father/male example in kids' lives, the daughters, the young women. The males that they see in their lives are the model of the male of their future husband. So if they grow up with an abusive father, an abusive male in their lives, that's what they know and that's what they think is normal and they're going to think.. Oh they're gonna get into a relationship with a man who beats them, who insults them, whatever. And they think 'this is normal, this is what I'm supposed to do'. But that's the male figures that they see are what they're getting to model their future husbands for. Just like the young male, their father, their male figures that are in their lives are showing them the example of what kind of male they're supposed to be. What kind of father, what kind of husband, what kind of mentor they're going to be.

R: We hope to disrupt the bad behaviors and set the example off. Not all are bad. Definitely not. Hopeful to disrupt the bad and just be the example whether it needs to be modeled or not. And some houses do not need to model, and some houses definitely have it together.

R: We have families in those communities that there's a man, there's a woman and they do a great--there's a family that helps us with sidewalk at the one site. The husband and the wife are both there and getting their kids and the other kids interactive in there. So there are good families.

I: And there are some amazing women out there who are†32:04†(indecipherable).†

R: There are also amazing fathers out there.

Everyone: \*laughing/agreeing\*

R: I really wanna hear what Dan's answer is. You started an issue here buddy.

R: Well you have the kids. And the focus on that. And thinking way into the future. And I have kids, you have kids, we all have children in one way or the other. One, or three or five, we all have kids. (someone else: 6). So there's a lot of this family we're all here, we wanna live, it's comfortable, we can go to any store we want, it's really not gonna cost a lot of gas money to get there. Everything's close. But it's like we aren't taught how to use it, but we come back because 'okay now we're safe'. Then we get to recede because it's safe. I don't wanna go back out, I don't know what it is really. But if you just start from the creek and start working your way up, there's a lot, there's so much potential, but we need to make that told through the kids. Maybe they'll leave and come back too. But what if they didn't wanna leave or didn't have to leave? Right now, they have to leave this area. People have to leave this area if they went to college to pay for it. I don't quite remember the question. When he says kids, to me, you moving into Meadville to open a business, that doesn't happen very often, thats not happening. But if you did, maybe you had no real reason to do it, you had your own reason. But you still did it. And you're down there, you're supposed to be shot. I swear to god you were supposed to be shot up down there. That's the opinion.

R: Ive never had a problem, not one problem.

R: And you're not gonna.

R: In that area, I've never had anything messed with. Ive had kids come like see my mechanics pushing a car like a fourth grader will go behind the car and push it.

R: Yeah, that's what's really happening there. It's not just dangerous zones.

R: Yeah, we have normal kids that I don't know their names but every time they walk by I get a smile or a wave.

I: Whats your neighborhood like? Is this in your neighborhood or where you work?

R: Where I work, where my business is.

I: So you create an aura of something around you that people trust, and they're drawn in by that.

R: I mean what drawn me, I think you guys are the voices. I'm not. But i just think small business can contribute to, to make it better. Or to make it bigger. Not commercially or anything like that, but to reach more people.

R: Yeah, whether it's with taxes or doing a block party and getting that community togetherness.

R: There's a lot of initiatives going on that I've done a lot of research on different small business and different small places and what works in one community doesn't work in another and doesn't work in another and doesn't work in another. There's an initiative where different barber shops are having children read a book to get dollars off their cut. Maybe thats something that you could be inspirational to the children. So here are some books. If you could read a book and somehow the kids get to take the book. Going places has books set up there and you can take them. I mean there are ways that you as a small business, because you care and because you wanna be there, can participate more and if they're trusting you, this is a hub.†

R: And if the kids trust you I betcha no one has taught them how to use a ratchet and a socket. It's probably used as a hammer in their house. So if you take the ten minutes as a male who knows how to use these tools appropriately and read them this page of the book and teach you sockets. Or read this page of the book and teach you wrenches. And uses that back and forth, then they're not going to use the ratchet as a weapon their brother, or as a hammer.

R: I guess sometimes I get tunnel vision.

R: Right, but your kids know how to use most of those tools appropriately, correct?

R: Half of them.†

R: Boys side or the girls side?

R: Mixed.

R: Okay, but realistically the kids walking by your shop every day, I don't know how many tools are in their houses or someone has sat them down to show even basic, this is a phillips head versus a flat head. And later in life, that stuff matters.

R: Right, when they have to change a tire.†

R: You were taught, your dad taught you. And maybe thats the way to get a local place that happens to make wrenches and things, maybe we could talk to them about having a set up type of thing where thats what you'd use. You'd use these materials. Here, these are for the kids. Ya know, if you have kids that are there in the neighborhood that are wandering, then you can direct them. You didn't know you were getting a new job tonight, did you?

I: I don't know if you guys have ever been out to the Acutec, the plant to see the interior of that plant. It's just an amazing operation, and I'm sure many of the small operations are also, but that machinery in there is so complex and so defined. It's kind of incentive for kids to get out there and learn that stuff and get involved in that.

R: And that's a trade around here thats vital to the community. That's a good industry.

I: It made Meadville great at one time. So I was gonna ask Dan a question because the story of your revival of your business was such a fascinating story to me and had a lot to do with reconstruction of North Street, and it was both very specific and concrete as far as what was causing some of the challenges to your business. There's also an energetic aspect of when it shifted, when it shifted to being a positive energy because the construction was done.

R: I don't know when it was but I realized there wasn't a semi or steam roller going through my parking lot. I pulled out on North St., I wasn't even thinking about it, I was just like I'm gonna go out this way, and there was no more orange cones, it was from Water St. to middle school. I'm like 'oh my...it's over'. I mean its completely over and thats just got me all fired up. And then in February, I think, I went to that pop-up, the Meadville neighborhood center did it, at that brick place and anybody apparently would've been able to show up, so eventually I did. I figured id try to do it, because at that point after three years i just wanted to go home, leave the city after every day was over because I was just tired of it. Not even looking around and understanding everyone else was going through it too. But it was a real pain in the butt. So to get out was what I wanted to do and then I was softening up at that point, I tried it. And then that summer, all of the sudden it was like no more construction. But it took me probably three, four days to realize that. Because McCormick Truck was still kicking around. But that's what it all came from. I could get in deeper and start cussing, but I don't want to, but boy it was tough.

I: I heard you speak about a Meadville, there was a meeting after this had began to smooth out for you. This was probably at the end of the spring, May or something like that.

R: At the Vernon Place? Was that the meeting?

I: At the city hall building. The corner of diamond.†

R: Oh the municipal church. I remember.

I: And you were liberated. Hallelujah! You'd seen the light.

R: I must have been excited.

I: That illuminated that entire meeting.

R: I was feeling pretty energized at that point. I never pressed the board before in my life, it felt like they were listening so I just kept going. But the morally inspirational one, like we were trying to get the parking structure to go off a concert in the Meadville neighborhood center and stuff. We were above the market house and i wanted to do the pop-up in my parking lot, but i wanted to do it at night because i wanted to do night time activities. Anyways, the band couldn't play so we ended up in the middle of the day, it was 3 o'clock, there was sun. My buddy from Saegertown put up tents and sat under his†42:03†and screwed 'em in the ground and it was awesome. And 50 some people came. The zipper project as humming over in the alley. People that normally wouldn't come, so that worked out. But before that, when I said i'd like your name attached to it, the zipper project, we were above the market house and the art, in the big windows, not the art gallery but the big room, I can't remember what it's called, the old dance studio part. And I said something about eventually we get to go up there and I pointed at the parking garage, because I really was aiming at that, and we could start my parking lot because I had space to use. And that's what eventually I figured out what I was doing was using the space to better everybody's, that section for that section in that moment in time. Without making it a vendor's fair, and screw people out of money and a good time, it should be like your backyard but everybody's there. That's the styling of keeping it simple so I can at least trust it. You don't want five bucks from me or 80, its just I can't afford it. Why is it so important that we have all this crap to buy? Why is it so important we forget where we're even at. And then there's trash. Somebody complained in the newspaper about trash after the Halloween parade. Ask thousands of people to come to your city and have an excellent time and cry because there's a can overflowing. It's gonna get picked up, it's gonna have to be, that's what you do with trash. Like nobody's gonna care, you're gonna whip it. 'Oh its full, I'm not carrying it'. So if you have more garbage cans, okay great, you just solved a huge problem for the Halloween parade. They can't even look beyond that. It's like so what, it was a beautiful, wicked fun time that night. Many, many times we don't get nice weather. That was nice to see that.

R: that was hours of free entertainment for every level of family, regardless.

R: Look at all the businesses that come together, it costs them money to participate. It's shocking how many business will jump on board with a concert or a community event, or whatever.

R: It costs money to be in that event if you're not a non-profit.†

R: And to build the floats and the car.

R: And all the money raised to a local beneficiary. And that changes each year, the local beneficiary.

R: I think more businesses would be on board to contribute.

R: What you said was really beautiful, it was like the definition of a pop-up. 'Using the space that I had available'. And I was just setting up for the Meadville neighborhood center's big zipper unveiling for this year, they have a space that was given to them by someone who is trying to lease it. But it is loaned for this installation, and I looked at Leah and I said 'this is pretty cool'. I do pop-up preschools. Autumn Vogel was there, and she did a pop-up art installation, we're all doing these pop-up things. And he goes it's kind of like improv, you just work with what you have. So what we're really doing is we're trying to bring as many people together in a space that's afforded to us, not charge anybody, and offer what we have. And it's beautiful. And it keeps happening more, and I think that's what this Pumpkin Derby was. It was just a bunch of people coming together rallied together with a big lasso, Dan, and bring us all together to give something greater than one of us could have done, greater than a few of us could have done, we all pulled together, we all pushed and made a pie. So each one of these is just a pie out of a space that is given to us at that time. Then it dissolves, it goes back to the normal space.

R: But like before that block party, I had never heard of the Going Places project. I think it's great now that I know what it is, and I think there's like businesses on Park Ave., or wherever, that would be willing to maybe financially sponsor and maybe someone knows Dilman's more than they know the Going Places project. Maybe everyone's coming to Dilman's but then get the Going Places project and Living Waters out there too.

R: To couple them with things that people are already doing.†

R: And get your services and whatnot, not promoted but pushed out there, so the public knows more about it.

R: And knows that you as a business owner, you were there sponsoring the event. You gave time, effort, energy, materials to the event. And you were not looking for personal gain, you were looking for the event, but it still was there at your spot. So there's a benefit to that.

R: But there's also, in the matter of a couple phone calls, other businesses were quick to 'okay I can't sell anything, okay', they went and brought more stuff, between shirts and cider, 25 gallons of cider, and everything and anything else in the matter of just throwing it together on short notice. You don't have to ask: 'I need x amount of this for the party I want to throw for the community.' Yeah, we all do. I'm not your brother, your aunt, your uncle, I mean let's just see what we can do. We normally would advertise, maybe lets see what happens. My mind, is 'how do you just do this?'. I just do it. Why do you to have permits and stuff from the city? Maybe just get people crazy enough as you to do it and it just always comes through. Even if it was raining this time, the rain didn't stop anything.

I: It seems like sometimes when you have the energy, it just finds its own vehicle.

R: But since our block party, I've had other businesses, other radio approach like 'hey if you guys do that again, let me know, id like to be involved.' They'd like to be involved. That's a good thing and they know it. Before we get ahead of their publicity team they gotta, ya know. It's pretty cool though, it gets more notice. It's gotten so much notice whenever the†48:34†participate in because to do it on your own or to do it by board you just can't do it. And there's so many boards, we're spinning in the toilet, it's not going down yet but here we are. The board, nothing gets accomplished, except maybe somebody might call them on something, they're gonna be shot down. Now you can't get $20,000 or something allotted to this area because you ticked off that person. I don't know, they won't let me in the board room, lets put it that way. But what we could do as business people, we can do all of that, we are our own board from payroll to washing the toilet.†

R: We don't have to ask anybody for permission. We gotta pay everybody for what we gotta do, but it's not all about money. It's about establishing the trust. When you need me, please hopefully they'll remember me to come do that. Not because of the gimic we threw together, but because ill probably remember a name or be like 'yeah yeah we were doing this' or something, or 'yeah I went to that thing'. I was seeing people, I don't know where I was just at. But I just saw them and then they looked at me and they smiled and said 'hey you gotta do that next year'. And it was somebody I saw.

R: We see families all over town, and kids will run up to us, especially if we're wearing a designated shirt and they're like 'Miss Jenn!' and they just start, and then they introduce us to their parents, who we may or may not have met. But we have kids like flock to us in Walmart, or the parade we were all watching and were like 'that's my kid, that's my kid', we were claiming hundreds of kids. So we're easily identifiable, but it's every where we go honestly because years on the streets and years in their houses and years in those relationships regardless of their moving or lifestyle changes, we stick with them.

R: They don't follow you, you follow them.

R: But doing that. Literally we had a newborn baby born last week, three pounds, and one of the first text messages dad sends me is 'I believe that God saved my baby'. Ya know what I mean, I'm not his family by blood, but I'll be in that brotherhood, sisterhood of Christ. This is what the relationship is now. So we go in the house and we say 'do you need meals? do you need this? do you need transportation for medical appointments? you have a brand new baby, are you prepared for this?'. And they said 'this is what we need', and this is what we can do.†

R: we are definitely the sighting, like people say to you like 'oh yeah you're the Pumpkin Derby guy, you're that guy'.

(talking about Mike's hat and hoe he's identifiable)51:28†

R: Pretty much anywhere we go in the Meadville, Saegertown zip code, someone will grab one of us and say. And it was funny I went into little ceasers and this woman says 'are you Jen from the street?'. I don't know if I like that title. And she was like 'I mean Jen from street church'. And I'm like 'yes I am, I like that title better'. I got a text message because everyone has my phone number for bus ministry, if they need their kids picked up I got a text 'are you the white chick who picks up kids for church?'. 'Yes, I am. Where are your kids?'. And that's okay, I don't care what they call me as long as we start building that bond.

I: It's a great thing for them also just to learn there are really good white folks around.†

R: Yeah, that's a small barrier in this town.

R: Oh, I think its nonexistent honestly.†

R: I mean there could be, but its very narrow.

I: I was in the Boston schools for many many many years, so I saw kids from poverty who didn't come across people of different backgrounds the way people sometimes living in the suburbs don't come across people of other background and cultures. So building that bridge across those cultures is sometimes more difficult, more of a journey. But when you can expose kids to both sides, its really tremendous stuff. So we have about an hour here. We're doing really really well, it's amazing. I wanna sort of go back to that Chris had brought up earlier. Sort of this balance between altruism, doing what you think you should do for a community and also how that somehow benefits yourself or your own life in some way. It's sort of a funny relationship between doing good for others and doing good for yourself and your own family. I just wondered if we could discuss that a little bit because it's not something that has become corrupt a little bit in the American ideal in that everything has a price to it, everything is commercialized, everything is monetized. But you guys are bringing it back to a different place again where its just about the spirit and the exchange is spirit to spirit and a material plane, but its not about price or transaction or profit. So, that's kind of a bring prompt.

R: Cause like he said on the radio, I thought it was just beautiful. I don't know the words exactly but businesses used to give us stuff. We had a quick conversation about that. In my opinion, we're the only ones that can take a risk and we wanna get noticed but not in a way that.. I don't wanna be the crooked guy. For me, it's a PR move but its like tenth on the priority list. My thing is like they can trust me, now they can, so when they do need me then it's over. The rest of it has everything to do with community. When we say building the bridges, there are none here. We just got the last one repaired, now we can like use them. I mean honestly we've been under construction too long. I don't know if any of us know why. We all get that experience now, we honestly do. If you can't trust each other, there is no sense of getting together. But I think sometimes I don't realize how much access to funds that we can get. And I wanted the Chamber of Commerce to notice me, I wanted the bigger guys, like Acutec, to notice me because how easy these little people and you guys are doing nothing but charging for every damn golf tournament, and you ask me for something to give away. (55:59†And this year I didn't give it to 'em, and we had a collective between some business. I said I'm not doing it your way anymore because it doesn't work. It absolutely doesn't work, I'm 37 and I need to be here for 40 more years. That's the way it is, and you aren't doing it for me. I don't expect you to. But you better notice some of these things that we're doing. Anybody, Mike's a few months in, but what a wonderful 'Hello, here I am!' for Mike. And I know him, our kids know each other. I mean there's a lot, time made us finally cross paths. And I didn't realize you were moved in until Facebook. 'What the heck are you doing? Are you crazy?'. He just opens up in Meadville, 'I'll do what I wanna do'. That's beautiful. I do what I wanna do and I do what I wanna do with you, and that's awesome. So it was a natural, and at that time when they had some meeting, ya know, not really gonna do something. They're gonna go down and ask them questions, don't waste your time, do something! And all this was generated in a few days, whatever you wanna call it. I mean a Pumpkin Derby off of a tow truck. We didn't know that was gonna happen until a few days prior. We carved the night before.

R: My boys the night before. They all did it and then they came on Saturday and they live in Titusville.

R: With Kristin's group, being out and giving the books and giving those advocates to navigate the paperwork better helps †the school teachers because if those kids are just a couple steps further and can read a little bit better, teachers can then focus on curriculum and schooling rather than discipling and catching some of those kids up and wondering why kid x, y, and z is not in school 4 out of 5 days a week. So if you can do that, my kid definitely benefits from your program even though you're on an elementary level.†

R: My program Going Places is a partnership between Meadville Children's Center, Crawford Central School District, and Laurel Technical Institute. We wrote for funding, it is a grant funded project, its through race to the top (?) funds, and we have a very specific target population of First and Second District because they're the needs schools in the area but we do what benefits the community as a whole. So the project itself is very close to me because I created it but we want the kids to benefit, we want the school to benefit, we want the children to benefit, but we also want the people involved in the partnership. So Laurel Technical Institute has an early childhood education program. Those early childhood education program people who are going to get their CDA, they come and help us at our events and get field experience with our kids. The school is getting a mobile kindergarten registration because that's a serious issue, kids aren't registering until a month into school they had someone register for kindergarten this year. The statistic, 70% of kids who register or don't make it to kindergarten on the first day of school don't make it though high school. So for me, I have all this knowledge, I have all this passion. My family is good, my kids are great. I know what I'm doing so why not use that to help others? So what it does for me is I can use what I have and what Ive done and what Ive created here, and what I know works with my family and my kids and we have a really solid base. And I can spread that to help the rest of the people who may not know about it, have it, know what to do. But I can help facilitate that.

R: Twice a month somewhere, either there or there, twice a month, and then we get†1:00:02†

R: And that's the plan. Once we've built trust enough to get there, is to start going. So now that we're recognized enough to go, to start going. And as far as funding, the funding ends soon. This was the pilot part, so we're still looking to see how we're going to carry this on beyond the funding stream. But what it's doing is working. And it's making those webs, it's webbing those kids, its webbing those families, its webbing the businesses and organizations. Its breaking down those silos and putting down little tiny bridges in between. And coming here tonight was also very rewarding to me because I'm like 'it's working!' I screamed how it was working, because it is. It's starting to come together.

R: And that's what we see with Living Waters. It works when I can take a bus from the movie theater, which is not near downtown Meadville and I can pick up 60 kids under the age of ten. Some parents choose get on, they willingly get on a bus, and they ride a bus for an hour to go to a church service and they ride the bus home. They do get lunch at this point. But they don't always get something other than church. And these are kids that are getting themselves up, getting dressed, and getting on a bus on a Sunday. The parents that we work with don't always facilitate that. They're not always home, they're not always encouraging to get them up and ready. So if I have a 7 year old standing on a street corner by Mike's business to catch a church bus, of course I'm gonna go get them. So that's the altruism. You can't not go. Because if we don't get them, someone else will. There's a drug epidemic. There's a lot of issues here. So if we don't get them, someone else will get them. And we need to fill them up and have that word in them so they're ready to fight and say 'I can do al things'. So they can have those battles and be ready and equipped with something other than their fists or the ratchet or. Because if not, they are going to resort to poor behavior because if they miss your piece and they're on†1:02:19†growing up, and then there's society coming against them. Our church is nowhere near the kids our church is getting. And they can walk to churches in town, but we choose to bus and they're available. And we're getting another bus because we have families that want to ride. So 60 wiggly kids on a school bus.

I: That gets back to Mike also. He loves watching the kids go by, loves the aura, the energy, the vibe. I can tell Jeremiah does also. It's just like the kids, whatever it is, the life force you get from them. It's an intrinsically adjoined. So there you're rewarded in that altruism. You guys, we've done a full hour here. This is pretty amazing. I think I'm gonna suggest maybe we come to a halt at this point, and let you guys go on your way. Could you just say your names just once as we go around and we'll just have it on the type in case we can't identify?

R: Jen Anthony from Living Waters.

R: Jeremiah Anthony from Living Waters.

R: Dan Hunter from the City of Meadville Business.

R: Mike†1:03:42†City of Meadville Business.

R: Kristin Smith from Going Places.

I: Peter McCaffrey signing off. That was amazing. That was a great session, you guys.