I'm Deb Lehman

I'm Cassidy Vail.

My name is Sylvia Jennings.

My name is Ariel Vickla.

My name is Leslie Moier.

My name is Courtney Hughes.

My name is Amy Bringer.

Peter McCafery, here.

Most of these questions start with sort of01:09 what your memories are of Meadville, what things distinguish Meadville from other places that you have been, things that happen cyclically or things that just happen on a one time basis and it made a deep impression on you, what is Meadville about your sense of heart and soul from your heart and soul impression. So, we will start by just asking and you have the commonality that you are here in one group studying early childhood education but you have some despairing points of perspective that may be different between amongst you so, how would you like to distinguish what you know about Meadville, what make Meadville unique to you?

I would say the people in it, a lot of people have friends and family in Meadville, so that distinguishes Meadville from any other place you go because you always have to come back to see your friends and see your family.

Okay, thank you.

I like the shops. The shops are unique and it's like a small town shop I like that about Meadville. I am not from here so, but it is real nice.

Not the big box stores but the smaller ones.

Exactly, ya.

Um, I recently moved in September from Oil City and it is not that much of a difference other than that there are more options to eat and to do everything. But, they are both small towns so they are02:40 .

For me Meadville is home. I have been here my whole life so that aspects that I like that I am seeing even more is community members coming together and creating these big events and things for families to do and that's a big deal. I know growing up people went out more often, you saw, your cruise line and things that they used to have in Meadville that brought people together and hung out and stuff like that, I just remember doing a lot of things like that, hanging out with friends and family.

I have to agree with Leslie, I was born and raised in Meadville, and I live in Cambridge but, I work in Meadville and I got to school in Meadville. So I was always around town and I love that the going places project was started because that brings the community together and they can all kind of share one big thing on learning how to play with their kids, work with their kids, and just make it better community as a whole.

So, sort of the small size and people coming out and doing things together, the connection between families, small shops, family continuity, people coming back, sort of small town consciousness like Oil City, something very familiar that you can come back to. Anything that you feel that distinguishes Meadville to the extent that if it were not here it would take away the identify of Meadville?

I was born and raised in Erie, and I moved to the Saegertown area and worked in Meadville for the last 6-7 years, and one of the things that really stands out to me is the road signs that are along...

322..

Ya 322, that really stands out to me, and also what they were saying, they have community events in Erie, but it's more intimate here to me it's more personalized here. It's really something, I have gone to some events and seen the students at the events or see different people, form the Heart and Soul Project, and then I will see them at another event, and it is very personalized to me, which is a big difference. Just those, those events. I know one that stands out, one of my favorites was my Mom and I happened to just kind of come across it was the lighting of the trees down at The Market place and they give you coco and do rides for the kids, and that was huge.

I remember in fifth grade they were just starting that road sign project, and at the time I was going to west end elementary school and they had brought it to our art teacher and asked for all of us to design a picture, so I was the one to did the snowball fight.

Where you really?

Ya.

That's awesome!

Wow!

I would say the parks. I am from not specifically Meadville, but from Conneaut Lake. But, I was in a youth group all year round in the summer we would always go to the parks in Meadville and have a picnic, play on the swings, and stuff. I always like the parks.

Why is this so important, that people come out and get to share these events with one another? Wouldn't you have that in Pittsburgh, wouldn't you have that in Erie? What is unique about here.

I would say if you had it in Pittsburgh or Erie, it's like more of a city setting, whereas Meadville is more of a small town, so everyone...

it's more homey...

homey... even if you don't know people they are kind enough to at least tell you hello and it has more of a comforting feeling then if you were to go to an event at Pittsburgh and have a whole crowd and don't know anyone.

You could go to an event two nights in a row in Pittsburgh and see not even see the same people twice. But, you go to an event one week here and then another week and you could see the same people and you could talk about what happened last time and what's happening now. I think it just brings the community together because you all know each other in some aspect, you are not strangers.

Lots of hugs, and how are you.

haha.

haha.

Ya.

Not only that but I think we are supporting each other's businesses and things to- often. Um, some of your local businesses are running different things and it pulls in more customer base for them as well.

Ya.

I think in the last five years I have noticed a change with conversations starting to happen from group to group. You know going places is here, and then through those events I started hearing about Heart and Soul, and then I started about different things going on and I know that they weren't interrelated but I noticed groups are starting to talk now and the community is starting to talk now which is huge. When I came from Erie they already had a little bit of communication going on in early childhood, well now it is kind of exciting because I am watching it take place in Meadville, and I think that is really exciting to watch something like this form.

Ya, I have definitely been waiting for that to happen, and I think it is finally happening.

I think it is starting now, it is and it's exciting I think for the students to see it. I know it's exciting for me to see it. I know sometimes you go to systems, you said Pittsburgh and they already have things set up, but to watch the process of how that happens is pretty exciting.

How do you since you are early childhood education, students now, how do you feel all of this effects the kids that are being raised in Meadville? All the things you are have talked about. What's the impact that you feel it might have on the experience of young kids coming up through Meadville?

I feel like it teaches them that no matter the difference of groups, of people, because Meadville is a very diverse area. I feel like when you have community come together at like a park or an event or anything in general it teaches the kids that no matter who you are, what you look like, or what you do, you can befriend them, you are still going to be loved, even if you are different you are still going to blend into a group.

I feel that it provides, it is providing our kids with more positive experiences in their lifetimes like being out and with their parents and it's getting the parents to recognize that we need to do more thing with our kids. It slows us down, and let's us live in the moment, and I think that is beneficial.

I know working at Meadville Children's Center everyday there is a list of the going places projects signs and dates and locations posted and we will have reminders sent out and everything, and they as soon as their parents walk in the door, they are excited asking them if they want to go they tell them about the events and everything, and then we will see them as co-workers we go and sign up and we will volunteer and help and see us and then we will talk about it and they will be like I saw you, and then we will talk about the things that we did. They really enjoy that and I think their parents enjoy it too, because it feels like they are getting help, no ideas of ways to play with their children, interact with them, and learn at the same time.

I feel like it takes a village to raise a child so they need people with good hearts in their life, and just always keep them on track and do good, a good influence so.

Do you feel you have that access to good folks here?

Yes.

And you kind of share the raising of the children, the information and the wisdom raising children and sharing with the adults and kids obviously.

Mhm.

I feel like everyone in this world looks at the bad, and the ugly and you don't pay attention to what's good and what's going on. I agree with what Leslie said, the kids grow up faster than you assume, like my Mom can still remember me being like 5 and now she sees me and I have grown up in the same place, the same house, and I have always been in Meadville because my Aunt lived in here, and she has seen me go from 5 to 18, and she still sees this 18 year old, 5 year old daughter, going to Meadville parks and just running a muck but I agree with Leslie on that fact that it goes so fast. So, it teaches the family to take the time to spend with their child, because one day you are not going to have the time, whether it's the child with the parents or the parents with the child at some point you are not going to have this connection if you don't work on it and stay with it through their growing, and so many people look at the bad, the ugly that happens here and in the world and I feel like people need to take more of the time to see that ya there is bad people and bad things going on in this world but if you take the time out you can be apart of something that makes this all better, even if it is something so simple as volunteering for like the going places project or volunteering to work someone or help somebody, you brought a little good to the world, and if you have a child with you and you set that example, then they know when they are older that when they see the good, the bad, the ugly, that's what parents are so afraid of is keeping their kids bottled and don't see that, look at that, be like that, but if you give them the things they need and the people they look up to, an you make a good example and volunteer for stuff, then when they are older even if they do see the good the bad and the ugly they are still going to grow up to be fine and wonderful people and they are going to continue on your legacy by volunteering and doing all the good things you did. But so many people are concerned that if they look at that stuff they are going to do that, I don't feel that way. I think if they do see that, or something they don't like, ya it will influence them or impact them very harshly but if they have all those good memories to look back on they are going to bounce back and they are going to become good people, I know that how I am. I have had things that have hit me so hard, that I am just like nevermind the world scares me when I was little. But, now that I am older I have so many like good memories mixed with the bad ones to the point where if I have a bad memory on that day and I take the time out, I can go back and overrule the bad memory with all the good ones I have from where I am.

You guys are really being very articulate about this process, I really appreciate it. We are really getting some deep wisdom about what kids need and how they build resilience. That sense of having time to do it here in a smaller town and kids not getting hardened by the hard knocks of being in a bigger city, and sort of this sense of integration in people’s lives and at home, and play are all kind of integrated with their neighbors, and everybody knows each other through different domains. Very, very important. Thank you very, very much.15:33

I just want to say that some of these events that we are having and I knew that a couple of you went to the Meadville event with the ice sculptures and miscellaneous things. But, I think it also makes people aware of community resources because a lot of times I will talk to people and they don't know all the community resources that are out there, and I think that's huge as early childhood professionals as we have to be aware of where to refer people when they need a community service that could help them. But, now that the community is talking they are seeing people out in the community, we are see different representatives form different agencies, and I think it helps people know what Meadville has, because I think sometimes we have those things and the dots just aren't connected and nobody knows how to get there, and I think that's something that I am seeing just by these fun events, even though they are fun for families, they are getting information and I think that's great.

I think that's very true, recently, we went to the library to try to do a partnership with them on some levels and the director took us on a tour of the library and I was blown away by the resources they have available, who knew, and I go to the library all the time. So, I agree that there are lots of things available in our community it's just knowing that they are there. So what could we do better? What could we do better as a community to support the kids coming up and support you as in your future jobs as childcare providers?

17:20 we learn a lot. But one thing that sticks out that maybe the community doesn't know is make the resources known, because as early childhood people that is our job to give them the resources and help them through what they need. But, I also think that sometimes when you do that to a parent it concerns them in a way because you might be critiquing on how they are raising their child, but I feel like if the community made the resources more well known on how to get things and how they can help and all this stuff, even if it was brought up in early child care centers or child centers or a head start or a teacher goes to talk to a parent to provide them with the resources they might not be as abrasive about it and they would be more willing to take your suggestion and go get the help because they know more about it than what you are providing for them.

Cassidy that's a great. The going places has a gps for parents that you can go on and they are putting the resources on. But, I think that's a great point that it's not just people with kids that need the going places but having that resource even on some website of Meadville that those people that don't come in contact or doesn't provide it they can go to you know like a Meadville website and see all the resources and a summary of what it is. You know like a one stop kind of thing would be great.

I have not really followed through with it but I have been asked about whether there are more parents group that meet, like different groups for parents support with different kinds of kids and different behavioral things that you are going through, so parents can get together and talk to each other and know that they are not alone with what they are going through with their kids and I guess there are some groups that are meeting but we just don't know where they are meeting but about them. One other things is as simple as the community gardens, it was forever before I knew about them, my mom actually told me about one that was open on Mohekin place street or whatever in town here. I don't know who started those but I was super excited and it was really great to find those and to know that they were out there. But, had they been posted more flyers or maybe on the radio, I think some people might hear it more and know that it is there.

You bring up a lot of great things I know there is an effort now, the Meadville Calendar which puts out all the collective events happening downtown. We need some more resources, the only resources we have are parents, and citizens. But, what you bring up about parents have a diffused stress of being a parent, we worked with one of the organizations in town that has a community garden actually near 2nd district school um, and they have an after school program at the U.U. church called creating landscapes, and it is run by parents for kids and for each other too, to support one another, and we had a story circle with them very much like this and they all really valued that talk as a chance to talk about the stresses of being parents and they feel like more parents need that now, because it is complicated and they don't get a chance to share that stuff, just to offload the stress not even to seek solutions yet just to rid oneself of the stress that tends to wear you down as a parent and then to think about resources to address stuff to you. Hold that thought, so we will get back to you about that.

And, I feel like if we did make resources more known as a parent like, you see it in any parent, i can see it in the kids that are here, I can see it of parents that I know that have kids, if they can't get to something they get stressed looking for it. It's like when your kids go to school, like I will use this as an example. When I went to school and got report cards or I got a bad grade if my parents couldn't get to it to help me to make my life better, or help me in any way they could they would get really stressed about it and really panicky which I think overall it affects the child because as adults unless you like I guess took an ECE class or you just knew, as an adult we don't really pay attention to how our emotions affect a child, but little do we know that even at the youngest of ages they will still notice. Because, like the only example I can think of is like when a baby cries in church and they need something, so they are crying and another baby cries so now you have two babies crying because the one started. So, I am like 18 and I will go to watch my 5-6 year old cousin, and if I go in after school I might be frustrated, I might be stressed, but the fact and the matter is if I am tired if I am stressed even if you don't show that to him or even if I don't say that to him, not thank you, they are going to know just by the look on your face how you are acting, it's like if you are a baby you are going to know their mother is said because you are holding them close to you all the time and as you are hugging your kids and you are talking to them but you don't realize that it affects them so much when you are tired and stress and you want to help them but you can't.

Yes, this I agree. You are doing a great job giving the foundational theory here.

HAHA.

It's multilevel because the kids need support with their anxieties and all the way up the ladder from adolescence to adults. But the parents need support because they transfer it down and it is a closed loop and it cycles back and forth between parent and child.

Especially, if you are a single parent it is even harder. You are a single parent so there is one of you and then you have a kid that is rambunctious and ready to go and wants to do things with you but you get so tired and stress from work, if they are going to school, school, family matters of maybe getting them to try and see the other parent. It just gets so stressful for them and even if you have another person there to help you like I know some people when they have a baby like their mother will come in and help them but I feel even though that is there and you have a resources, some parents are scared to use it, it is their baby, it is their child, it is their job to worry about them because as a society the more you look at it the more they say it's your child it is your concern, and it is like an airplane and people say it is inconvenient to bring a baby on an airplane, as a society we don't stay as open-minded people when it comes to babies and it comes to children because everyone is like that's your kid that's not my problem. I don't want to help you.

And that's kind of like what you were saying where it takes a village to raise a child and that's what seems to be the focus.

So, building trust and having access to sharing emotions, sharing challenges, between parents and families in a way that is safe and does not feel intrusive. If you guys were to make a recommendation, we are getting up on 11 O'clock so I don't want to take too much time but if you guys are going to make a recommendation because I think you are in a way in terms of what would be a major kind of support for families, kids at their level, adolescents at their level, and parents at their level, what would you recommend, what would help Meadville?

I think we are on the right track with the Going Places and the different projects around town that are happening, maybe just getting the word out their more in enough time that maybe you guys can schedule it, in with their schedule so it is not really a last minute thing and the kids are upset because they can't go because their parents already have something else planned and just getting it out there a little earlier I guess, making it known, setting stuff up in advance and that, that way the community can still get together and plan it out better. But, I think we are on the right track with the Going Places and all the different events going around town.

Agree.

I think I might a suggestions would be even specific support groups. Like parents of teenagers, and I know there are some groups with parents with children on the spectrum and things like that, just some real specific support groups for parents.

I know some parents have asked for particularly adolescent development groups or psychological groups, what is depression, what is cutting, or things that specifically need to be addressed.

I agree.

I feel like all though childcares are as supportive as they can be I feel like parents don't take as much advice as childcare as they do, because in high school I did a job thing for head start but like that's a resource that we have and we don't use it like we should or some parents use it and don't think of it as much. How some parents will still call it a daycare, like you are just there, your parents are at work, you're just there, but there are so many resources in a childcare that we can don't use or that are not known there for a parent to use.

Anybody have anything else, I think we are at the end of our time. I'll tell you a little, you know what the Mom's at going places said they said, we need an indoor play space for kids in the winter.

Yup!

I agree!

I agree too!