

Justin Bullock: Welcome back to another episode of Bush School Uncorked. I'm your host Justin Bullock. Sadly, I'm without my cohost Greg Gause, so I'm going to do my best to cover for both Greg and I. But I have a nice sort of cohost today in Will Brown.

Will Brown: There we go. I can serve in that function. I could not fill Greg's shoes by an stretch of the imagination, but I'll give it a shot.

Justin Bullock: We'll try. We'll try to still be as entertaining as when Greg is here. But I think we're going to be more entertaining because we have a huge panel with us today of practitioners that are here to remind Will and I about what we don't know about the real world.

Will Brown: That's right. That's right.

Justin Bullock: But before we get to that, just some general updates. We're having this episode recorded today. Next week we're going to go ahead and record the next episode. We have scheduled to have professors Ann Bowman and Rob Greer to come spend some time talking about local governments with us. So if you're hearing this and it's not yet ... what is the date on that? October 29th? Today's the 22nd. A week from now would be the 29th. October 29th at 6:00 PM we'll be back here recording at Downtown Uncorked. Yeah, I think that's all I have as starting stuff.

Justin Bullock: As I mentioned, we have a panel. We'll get to them and let them introduce themselves. But we have a familiar guest with us today, Professor Will Brown.

Will Brown: Hello. Will Brown, professor at the Bush School, and Director of the Center for Non-Profits and Philanthropy. I've been at the Bush School for 13 years. And part of why it's fun to be able to have a little panel here is our work that we're doing in the Brazos Valley and some of the Brazos Valley initiative pieces that we have going on. So I'll let the panelists introduce themselves so you know who else is sitting here with us.

AJ Renold: Sure. This is AJ Renold. I'm the Executive Director at Voices for Children, Casa of the Brazos Valley. I've been in my role for about three years now. I oversee a court-appointed special advocacy program where we recruit and train support volunteers who are appointed as a guardian of children in foster care.

Justin Bullock: Very nice. Thank you for being here.

Will Brown: Yeah.

Allison Prince: I'm Allison Prince. I'm the President and CEO of United Way of the Brazos Valley. I have worked there for 11 years, but have served as the CEO for five, where we fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in the Brazos Valley. Primarily serve as a funder of non-profits and provide a variety of

other services for our community around education and financial stability and health.

Justin Bullock: Excellent. Thank you. And thanks for agreeing to be a part of the panel.

Allison Prince: Of course.

Theresa M.: I'm Theresa Mangapora, and I am the the Executive Director of the Brazos Valley Food Bank, and I am old. I've been there for 15 years.

Allison Prince: You're not old. You're seasoned.

Justin Bullock: Oh, wow. That's longer than you at the Bush School, Will.

Allison Prince: We call that seasoned.

Will Brown: Little bit longer than me at the Bush School. You beat me by two years.

Theresa M.: Yeah. You're one of the first people I met at the Bush School. The food banks in general do the same thing. We're trying to make sure that people are fed who don't have access to nutritious food. Our food bank has come a long way. It used to just be the cans on the shelves. Now we do a lot more to prevent hunger. We're doing a lot more to educate, and solving hunger for tomorrow with all kinds of programs. We're doing a lot. It's a lot. It's good. It's a lot to keep up with.

Justin Bullock: So on the theme of a lot, I think that maybe is a good place to jump in with the panel. One of the things that we don't get on the panel often is people actually doing the work we sit around and talk about, actually out there doing it. So I want to give the audience just a brief snapshot of what is a day like in your position. I know there's no typical day. This is what the local government managers tell me as well. But just give me a flavor of some of the things that you have to deal with in your position so that both Bush School students, prospective students, people out in the workforce that might think about non-profits, can have an idea of what does it look like given your position and your types of organizations?

Will Brown: Not that I know, but we did do some study on this, and we did do a little bit of work to try to talk to people; what does their day look like? So I can use that to start out. One of the things that they already know is that as an executive director they do everything. They do everything in their organization from beginning to end. So one of the challenges of an executive director is, because modest size organizations, every one of them ... Theresa, yours is probably the biggest of anybody. How many employees do you have, Theresa?

Theresa M.: 25.

- Will Brown: 25. So that's the biggest organization. And you two are probably-
- Allison Prince: 12.
- AJ Renold: 16.
- Will Brown: 16. So modest sized organizations trying to do a lot. As an executive director they have a tremendous range of responsibilities from managing the operations of the organization, understanding risk, sustaining funds and raising money, thinking about program. Oftentimes people come into it as program experts, and then all of a sudden they're put into a role of leading an organization. There's expectations that come from ... The number of stakeholders that agency executives have to work with blows your mind in many ways. So one thing that we know is that there's a sort of monster of what it means to be an executive director. And part of their talent is how do I figure out how to be able to use volunteers? How do I figure out how to be able to use the current staff that I have? How can I take the professionals?
- Will Brown: So one observation is they do everything. If you literally look at the chart, we ask similar kinds of organizations, "What do you do," it covers the gamut. Typically an executive of a business isn't going to cover that kind of ground. So that's one observation that I have in reference to what executives....They live it on a day-to-day basis.
- Justin Bullock: All right. Thanks for the framing. We can go in any order you like.
- Allison Prince: Yeah, I would echo that, that every day is going to look a little bit differently. And it's also going to be a little bit seasonal based on what we're working on. When it's getting ready for a board meeting a lot of your time is going to be prepping materials and prepping the discussions for that. Or if it's fundraising season, which United Way kind of has a season for fundraising during our campaign, but fundraising happens all year long. Today it was recruiting board members and starting the day talking to school principals about their charitable campaign coming up at their school, to presenting to college students about non-profits right before that. So it's kind of-
- Justin Bullock: All kinds of hats.
- Allison Prince: Yeah. We're in a rental situation, so we don't own a building, but it used to be changing light bulbs included, building maintenance and stuff like that.
- Justin Bullock: Yeah, I guess so, yeah.
- Theresa M.: Cleaning toilets.

Allison Prince: I don't have to clean toilets anymore. I never really did. Let's be honest. I barely clean the toilets at my own house, let alone at my organization.

Theresa M.: That was Allison that said that.

Allison Prince: Might want to go to the bathroom before you come to my house.

Will Brown: [crosstalk 00:07:19] you're a little busy.

Theresa M.: It's a lot. We had an opening. A distribution manager is a high-level position in our organization. We had someone there for a very long time. So the position became open, and we thought, "Okay, let's do what all the other food banks do, and let's go for-profit industry." So I try to hire some folks, and the culture shock for that individual was incredible. In fact, the first day asked for a \$10,000 piece of equipment that would do automatic pallet wrapping so that no one had to do it manually, and I was like-

Justin Bullock: With what money? Yeah.

Theresa M.: This is not x, y, z company that you came from. I think we could use dollars better. With 10,000 you get a lot of food. Then the person was like, "My position should be six positions. I can't do all of this." It was disheartening, frustrating to some degree. I'm off topic because that's not really what my day is like. But we've had some turnover. What I'm finding is is that skillset is important, but value and understanding of the mission, and understanding that and what resources we realistically do have and do not have seems to be very, very key.

Will Brown: You overlay that with some of the stuff around what we expect to pay people in non-profit organizations.

Allison Prince: [crosstalk 00:09:13]

Theresa M.: And then what we pay in this community.

Will Brown: And then what we pay in this community. It becomes challenging. I talk to people all the time in reference to what their expectations are, what needs to get done, and then what pay is associated with that. That's where that individual's like, "Yeah, but this is six people's jobs." I could see why you would try to pick people on heart and passion and concern and interest in what's going on, because you have to give so much.

Theresa M.: But then you have to teach them Excel.

Will Brown: Yeah.

Justin Bullock: Yeah.

Theresa M.: But anyway [crosstalk 00:09:47]

Allison Prince: How to do a mail merge, right?

Theresa M.: Yeah.

Justin Bullock: I use teach Excel too. It's tough.

Theresa M.: Do you know that mail merge is something only old people know how to do?

Allison Prince: But I'm old I guess.

Theresa M.: And it's so brilliant.

Allison Prince: I know.

Theresa M.: It's like I have to type all this stuff over?

Allison Prince: No. Excel does some beautiful things. I feel like that's a soapbox that we could get on right now.

Theresa M.: Sometimes you learn that being like a secretary or something, if you've ever had to work your way up or whatever.

Allison Prince: Again, being an executive director sometimes you are your own secretary and you have to do these things. It's like I should have somebody who can do a mail merge document, but right now that's what the job calls for today.

Justin Bullock: So let's hear about your day as well.

AJ Renold: Well, I walked into my office this morning running a little late for a staff meeting, and I had a Kendra Scott bag that was filled with wine corks from my house, and a power drill, and my briefcase with my laptop in it. So the power drill was to take ... We own our building. We have a little bit of a mold issue. There's a whiteboard that needs to come off. And somebody can't find the screwdriver, so that's what the power drill's for. And then the Kendra Scott bag full of wine corks is for a wine pool for a golf tournament next week for a display and wine pool. And then walking into my staff meeting, I haven't finished the staff agenda yet with the question of the day to engage our employees and have a conversation so we can just stop and get to know each other a little bit. And then staff meeting happens, and then I have a meeting with a burnt out employee who would like to just walk away from child abuse, and bringing him back in because he is a ... I don't know. What's above a millennial?

Allison Prince: Zennial? Is that next? Xiel?

Theresa M.: Generation X.

AJ Renold: Very smart, talented, energetic person that needs to understand that there's a flow. With non-profits, yes, you're going to get burnt out. So that conversation, what we can do to kind of build in support. And then it was grants, grant reporting for end of year, beginning of year, budget stuff, health insurance. We offer 100% coverage of health insurance. That's something I really fought for. But now every year I get to evaluate it, so I'm a health insurance expert, or trying to be, to make a good decision and pitch it to the board. That's like by lunchtime.

Justin Bullock: Yeah.

AJ Renold: So the rest of the day I keep going, but yes, it's constantly switching gears between people and technical issues and HR, program. We got five cases in one day on Friday of two two-year-olds, a three-year-old, a one-year-old, and I don't even know how old the other one is, of confirmed child abuse, kids entering the foster care system. So to be an executive director, it takes such a wide skillset, or just good at problem solving and managing your own stress. So I sit in my backyard with a campfire. [crosstalk 00:13:14]

Justin Bullock: Yeah. So I'm hearing that, just as maybe you would expect, a wide array of different types of tasks, fluctuating workflow, dealing with burnt out employees, trying to find resources. One of the tensions that I heard in there that I wanted to ask a little bit about is we're talking about an employee showing up wanting to spend \$10,000 on a tool to improve their workflow, which is way out of the bounds of something that you could do. And on the other side you have this burnout problem from employees having to maybe do too much with too little. I'm sure everyone approaches it differently and in different situations. But not spending the \$10,000, part of the argument is that money should go toward the actual delivery of the services, which is a good argument and I buy.

Justin Bullock: And at the same time, you have this balancing of how do you invest in your capital infrastructure? How do you invest in your employees in terms of the financial resources like healthcare and not having so few people where they get so burnt out? So in your own head, maybe tell me a little bit about how do you think about the balance of trying to put every dollar towards the services that you need to provide by also understanding as the executive director, the person running the organization that some real amount of those dollars have to go towards organizational things? How do you think about that balance in your head, if you do?

Theresa M.: Well, we did a capital campaign, so I know the importance of the longevity of the mission of what we do is bigger than obviously me and current staff. We needed this building, so I knew that we needed to invest in that. What's come

with that is investment in a lot of extra contract services to keep this building up that are killing me. It's killing me. But I can substantiate it to any businessperson that's willing to listen in their frame of mind of how they spend their dollars. I actually had one person who owns a business in town say, "All that money went to food, right?" And I said, "Well, no, I can't say that for a fact because that food isn't moving itself. It's not storing itself. It's not paying for the lights." So, no, there is administrative overhead, but I can tell you what rate it is and you'll be happy with it. At first he's like, "I'm really not okay with that." And I said, "You own a restaurant. Let's talk about your overhead. Let's talk about this." I think sometimes when you're in your donor personal life you forget those other things. And I just had to keep him back to that.

Theresa M.: But we do 100% for health insurance and have since 2005. I think non-profits should because we aren't maybe paying as well perhaps. I don't think our pay is horrible. We get to look at pay for similar food banks across the country and similar size, similar food distribution, similar staffing and all of that, and we seem to be right in line. It doesn't seem to be meeting the expectations of people graduating, but it is in line with this community and what other food banks are doing, so I stick by that. But don't get me wrong; we invest in trucks. We invest in fork lifts. I invest in those kinds of things.

Theresa M.: But when it came to outfitting the offices, desks were donated, and chairs. They match. They look like lawyers' furniture, and they are from a lawyer, like some firm in Houston, and it's clunky, but we don't look horrible. People didn't particularly care for that because they had a favorite chair that was fixed to their butt or whatever, and I was taking it away so everything matched for the first time in the history of a food bank. But I literally have to tell people that walk in the door, "This furniture's donated," because they think it looks too nice. They actually think it looks too nice. They think the building is too nice just because it's big.

Theresa M.: We live in a unique community, because other food banks are pretty swanky in other parts of Texas that don't do a whole lot more than us, and they don't get that same-

Justin Bullock: Kind of push back.

Theresa M.: So the push back is real. I deal with it quite a bit. It can be about, "You don't serve this population, do you? Because I won't give you money." Or "You don't use your money for this. How much do you spend on fundraising? Who does your fundraising pieces," and things like that. But those are fair questions because transparency is important. And then they can make up their mind whether they want to support us or not.

Theresa M.: But we do have values with what we want to support for infrastructure. Sometimes the board and I are at odds because they're long-term thinking, and

I'm just thinking, "Okay, this is another thing I got to raise money for." They're usually right. Absolutely right.

Justin Bullock: Other thoughts maybe? That's really helpful. Thank you.

Allison Prince: Yeah, I think it's kind of a push/pull balancing act of investing to take care of your employees. The thing is that every employee of United Way could walk away tomorrow and the organization will falter for a while. I would hope that the board would step in and keep it going. But the employees are what, at this point, between that and the relationship with the board, are what makes the organization happen. It doesn't just happen every day. We run a 211 call center. Those calls don't just get answered by anybody. They have to be answered by a human being, and we have to take care of them. And we can't expect them to use antiquated equipment while we're trying to solve issues. I think when we think about it, it is such a unique paradigm that we live in because we're the sector that exists to fill a gap that for-profit and government can't fill, and we're trying to solve the world's biggest problems, and yet we're supposed to do it with donated furniture, donated equipment, expired food, and pay our people the very same salary that they could qualify for the very services that we provide. Aren't we shooting ourselves in the foot when we are perpetuating the same problems happening if we aren't truly trying to solve it?

Allison Prince: I think we do much the same of looking at the salaries of other United Ways and the salaries of other organizations in our size. That's the nice part of being part of a larger membership organization like United Way worldwide, that they have access to that kind of information that we can look at what our salaries in comparison to metropolitan sizes. It's hard sometimes for donors to understand because they get that somewhere in their head it's that no more than 25% of your money can go towards admin. We're far below the 25%, but it's like at what point if you go too low are you sacrificing something, are you sacrificing your own organization's ability to fulfill its own mission? It's absolutely absurd of a for-profit business to not reinvest in yourself. Why do we hold non-profits to this different standard?

Justin Bullock: That's very helpful. Yeah.

AJ Renold: Yeah, I agree. This mentality of scarcity, we should operate on nothing basically. If people understood what it takes to do it most people on my board would not work for the salary and do the amount of work that we do. So I feel like a lot of my job is doing a lot of research. So I need a new donor software.

Allison Prince: Ouch.

AJ Renold: I have to be an expert on everything. Whatever I need, I need to go do my research, find the best option, make the argument for it, and make sure that there's a way I can either find a grant for it, I can negotiate a payment plan for it. And I have to make the argument to my board about why it's needed and

what I'm going to change. What's going to change in our organization if you make this investment? And then I have to prove it. So knowing my organization and knowing my data and what the needs are for the organization and going out to find it, figuring out how to pay for it, and improving it on the other end, this skillset, again, when you have some board members who think there's no way we would pay \$10,000 for new donor software.

AJ Renold: So I have to prove, well, if we do this our revenue is going to increase and our staff is not going to be burnt out because they're trying to manage 300 invitations or thank you notes. Things like that, as far as investing in infrastructure and staff monitors. I'm constantly making arguments to fight for my staff to have the best of the best, computers, laptops, because they can do their work better, and we'll retain our employees and we'll have better numbers. We will ultimately get to permanency for kids and get them out of foster care faster if they have the tools that they need to do their job. In Centerville or Navasota, they don't have internet access, well, they're getting hot spots if they can do their work better that way. So I do a lot of fighting for that infrastructure to my board, and telling a story, but also getting it at half the price or spread out over learning... [Crosstalk 00:23:07]

Justin Bullock: I think people forget about overhead and that all organizations have them. The other one that I run into, so I teach public management so I'm often thinking about these types of issues but from a government standpoint, local, state, and federal. It's different, but they have some of the same push backs on like why are you paying someone x amount of money to do a job. Right?

Justin Bullock: So I actually recently was texting with a friend who sent me something about a non-profit, and the comment was, "I can't believe they make that much money. People that work in non-profits shouldn't make that much money." I don't remember how much it was, but it was a CEO of a large non-profit.

Allison Prince: Probably United Way. We usually get thrown under the bus for that. Yeah.

Justin Bullock: Probably United Way. It might've been, right?

Allison Prince: I'll take on that fight if you want to have it. Tell me who your friend is. I'll call him.

Justin Bullock: Exactly. So I'm like, "But there are labor markets." Right? So if you don't understand how labor markets work, non-profit or government can't attract good executive leaders if you pay them nothing. It doesn't work that way.

Theresa M.: Just recently someone asked my husband ... They were floored that I got paid. They thought I was a volunteer. And they thought the food bank was part of Twin City Mission. Not that there's anything wrong with Twin City Mission. But I said, "Holy crap." We were three or four people in 2005. We're 25 now in a new building, and there's still people who have no idea. So I am not doing a good job

with the education part, clearly. But our salaries are listed on 990. Anybody can see it. They can compare it.

Justin Bullock: They can see ours too.

Will Brown: That's right.

Justin Bullock: They can see ours too.

Theresa M.: I've actually had donors write me a check and say, "You should give yourself a raise. You don't make enough for how much you do," which was very sweet. But that's beside the point. For the skillset that they're talking about that we have to have, and for me to run what's pretty much a small business in town that's getting 11 million pounds of food back into this community at a cost of \$300,000 to these entities, huge impact. Huge impact. I don't know how much you guys put back into the community, but we're making a huge impact. I was talking to someone that sponsored a table at one of our events. I was like, "Hey, so how many employees do you have?" He's like, "25." I was like, "Oh my gosh." I've always looked at this person like a very successful local business, and he is. But I'm like, "That's me." And that sounds really arrogant-

Allison Prince: No, it is.

Theresa M.: But it's like I'm doing that, just in a different way. We don't have a big marketing budget. You're going to see us on TV because TV has to give us air time.

Allison Prince: Thank you local media market.

Theresa M.: I love it. But you know what I mean. They need to do public service announcements. I love it. But we don't have big marketing dollars or anything like that.

Allison Prince: No. Or it's the first one that gets cut.

Theresa M.: Yeah, professional development, marketing, those kinds of things-

Allison Prince: Travel.

Theresa M.: ... if things get tight can get really cut. So I don't know. I can't believe I'm going to say this, but the director of the Houston Food Bank, they're the largest food bank in the entire country, and I guess globally they're the largest as well. We're affiliated with them to some degree. When we were looking at our new building he's like, "Don't look at just functionality. Look at the experience. You have to compete with all the other non-profits. So what value do you bring to a volunteer when they walk into your place?" So it was like color and space and open, tall ceilings, cheap stuff that we could do, because we had to cut that

budget so much on that building because it was just crazy. But it's worked. We get these kind of compliments like, "Your other place was dark and dreary." So we were milking the hull. We don't have any resources for a long time. But at some point you go over the hump, and you have to embrace you're a professional organization with professional staff, a lot of people with master's degrees that take pride in what they're doing, and they deserve an office. And yes, we have this opening that people walk into and feel welcome, and it's okay.

Justin Bullock: Yeah.

Allison Prince: Yeah.

Will Brown: I was just going to reflect on that idea of being able to attract volunteers and retain them in a whole-nother labor market, right? We're used to being able to think about, well, we can have a labor market in reference to how we compensate people. But they have to figure out, "How do I attract a labor force in a labor market of volunteers? How do I retain them? How do I attract them?" Theresa gave a great example about it has to be a good experience for people. They have to come in and feel like they had a good time, that they contributed, that they were useful. Yeah, it's a lot.

Justin Bullock: So all of you have been in the community at least a little bit of time at these executive levels. What do you see are recent challenges? I know we talked about money. I was asking what are the biggest challenges. Everyone was in agreement that it was resources. So the resource environment maybe aside, as you've been doing your jobs which parts of the environment do you think are getting more challenging? What's changing that is becoming tougher for you or harder or just something you've observed that's changing about the non-profit sector, either broadly or in our community?

Allison Prince: Do you want to go first? She's ready to go.

Justin Bullock: Yeah, do it.

AJ Renold: I feel like it's kind of trending to start non-profits.

Theresa M.: Yes. Oh, lord.

AJ Renold: So everybody wants to give back, and they have a great idea, and they want to start a non-profit, and it's so easy to do it. It's really easy to start a non-profit. So we have I think 1,400 non-profits in this area.

Allison Prince: Up from what? Wasn't it [crosstalk 00:29:18]

Will Brown: I mean, that just continues to grow. We're seeing it's one of the fastest-growing sectors as far as number of entities. Hundreds new each year being formed and established and set up.

AJ Renold: And I don't know. I wish it was a little more difficult to start a non-profit, because there are some core non-profits that are doing what nobody else can do that now have to compete with like 100 other non-profits. So I don't want to discourage people from helping, but I wish that the process of getting that 501(c)(3) certification was a little more rigorous. Like if you have an idea to fill a need that is not being met right now in another way, then wonderful. But I wish it was more rigorous, because now we get to compete for a small amount of funds, and the process of grant applications seems to be taking longer, to me, because we have this overabundance of non-profits all trying to do the same thing. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. If you have a great idea I think you should be pressured to explore other options or make the argument of why this is really needed in the community. Right now, I know at least probably three in the last six months new non-profits.

Will Brown: Operating spaces similar to your own.

AJ Renold: Yeah. Even though nobody can do what we do because we're court-appointed by the judges. No other program does that. But it gets confusing to the public or to donors who want to help, and they have connections. Also, the whole other component of this work is our ability to build relationships with people. So we have to do that constantly and maintain those relationships. So when you're competing with other connections and whatnot, even in a small community, and I wouldn't even say competing. Yes, that's great that they're doing this work, but there are some very poor non-profits that are serving a critical need that will continue to need your support. So it's an interesting problem.

Allison Prince: Yeah, I think about that too. I'm not one that's anti-duplication of services. I think that there can be good times for duplication of services. There can be times that that's beneficial. And non-profit is really just a tax code, that we should operate very similar to for-profits. In the for-profit world it's kind of the same thing that if someone comes along and can do your business better, faster, stronger, they will either run you over or buy you out. So I don't feel like we should be immune to that; I think we should be aware of that and hold ourselves to the standard to try to do the best. But I would also say that people who want to start non-profits, to do your homework and find out what else is out there. Because I think a lot of times people are like, "Oh, there's nobody who's doing this," and then they get down that path and they're like, "Oh, there's other people that are doing this."

Allison Prince: And the really beautiful thing about non-profits is that we love to work together. We rely on working together, so we are incredibly open with our resources and incredibly sharing with our resources. And either of these women next to me, if they needed something that I could help them with, I would send

whatever document, whatever support that we could. Because ultimately we all do better when we all do better. So we are in competition for donor dollars, but at the same time we also see the critical need of our services and that all of us need to be here.

Allison Prince: We don't really have a competitive space operationally. We would be willing to share, but we don't even have the opportunity because people don't approach us to say, "Hey, I'm thinking about this thing," because I think we're really good at saying what our boundaries and what our limits are of our current capacity. And if we can't do it, then fine, do that part of it. But don't just go and reinvent the entire wheel just because you see an area or you think it's a cool thing that you're passionate about. Great, get involved where you're passionate.

Allison Prince: Uh-oh, you're scooting up to the microphone.

Theresa M.: No, it's actually a huge pet peeve of mine that we don't collaborate more. You can't make people do it. You can't make people have the same motivation for why they start what they start. I think a lot of people want to put a flag in the sand and say, "I did this," unfortunately.

Allison Prince: It is kind of a trendy thing.

Theresa M.: It's very trendy. It's a thing that you can do, but I think we've all made the case that the proof is in the sustainment. People rely on those services. You can't be fly by night. There are people that were key funders of the food bank that are now doing non-profit work. So I don't get money from them anymore. Their influence has moved onto those things that they do now. We're talking about people who have lived here for a long time, and if I said names most people would know who they are. So it's not even just the millennials coming out of school like, "I can do anything and I'm going to." Everybody's on that bandwagon.

Theresa M.: To some degree, I'm going to say this, it's this idea that anybody can be an executive director because it's not professional. You're not doing anything the way that we would do it in the for-profit. Where I actually spend a lot of money and loan money to get the specific degrees I got so I could do what I'm doing. So it's insulting to me and it's insulting to a lot of our staff. When someone thinks that a \$2.6 million food bank that..I'm a volunteer, they're out of touch with what's happening.

Justin Bullock: Yeah. They just don't understand the environment that you're working in. Going a little bit different direction, but something that would be interesting to me, we've talked a little bit about cooperation and competition, and we've talked about some of the ways in which some things are similar to the private sector, some things aren't similar to the private sector. So one thing the private sector has is a profit as a measure of their success. You each do a little bit different things. I was wondering how you think about how your organization thinks

about as you're managing by goals or managing by objectives, what are your metrics or what are your outcomes that you are trying to keep in mind, that you're trying to maximize or make the best use of resources? What things are your different organizations working towards from a measurement standpoint?

Allison Prince: I would go to not anything super specific, but that we all are kind of in the double bottom line industry, that we have to look at our revenue versus expenses as a measurement. That's probably the closest comparison to for-profit. But we're also looking at our mission as the other bottom line thing. How do we achieve our mission? How are we working to put ourselves out of business, essentially? While hunger, while community issues around education, financial stability, and health, while child abuse, I'd love to live in a world where those are out of business; I know those are probably unrealistic expectations. But if we operate that way, we're going to operate very differently than if we're just, "How many more people can we serve? How many more people can we serve?"

Allison Prince: So I think it's a challenge of getting past that unit service, and into changing ... I think Theresa probably has the best stories on that with your programs that you're doing on preventing hunger-

Theresa M.: But they're so new that we don't have the long-term measurements yet. I think that AJ can probably speak to that. But let me give you a concrete example for people who are in the business. I did hire a distribution manager from the business world, but she's also in Junior League, so she knew the food bank. She cares about the mission. She's over inventory, so she's constantly like, "But we have a loss of x number of dollars," and I say, "No one's ever talked to me about it that way. Did that food go out to x, y, z agency for like 10 cents a pound? I'm happy. It's a loss? I really don't ... " "But I can't do this. This is not good. This is not good." I was like, "I'm not looking at that. I want you to look at this." It's a constant battle because that is definitely what she looks at. I'm like, "Yes, we lost some money, but guess what happened," and it's mission-oriented.

Allison Prince: People ate.

Theresa M.: Yeah.

Allison Prince: People ate.

Theresa M.: And she's feeling better, but she's still really uncomfortable.

Justin Bullock: That's a really interesting cultural one where it's still getting the goods out there, even if at a loss, whereas doing anything where the marginal cost is greater than the marginal revenue in the private sector is just something you don't do in general.

Theresa M.: Yeah. It's like, "This food's going to expire in 30 days. What do we do?" "Make it free on the shopping list and get it out so a kid gets it." "What? That's a something, something, something hit. That's my problem." Then I go back in my office.

Will Brown: Giving food away.

Allison Prince: And pray for some more donations, right?

Theresa M.: Yes.

Allison Prince: Yeah. Actually, at church on Sunday our pastor tackled this topic of I don't remember exactly, but he talked about in your business world that if you're doing things right sometimes you are going to sacrifice, and if more of the business community did that maybe less of the non-profit sector would be needed, that if you're a developer, if you would be willing to take a hit on just this much of your business to develop those into low-income housing instead of all just about profit and bottom line, would we need to exist as much? Could we work together a little bit differently? But that's way deeper than the metrics that you're asking about.

Justin Bullock: Yeah. I don't know how to measure those things, but I agree that they're important.

AJ Renold: Yeah. I have a piece of paper on my desk right now that says, "In God we trust. Otherwise, bring me data."

Justin Bullock: I like that.

AJ Renold: I want to see data. I want to understand what's been done in the past. I want to measure it, make goals, figure out what kind of metrics we need to see to tell the story of what we do. What is a measure of success in a child abuse case? Well, to me it's that we close the cases faster than the regional average and the state average and the nationwide average. And then that we're monitoring whether kids come back into care. So we're going back 10 years ago and measuring. We have the new case data spreadsheet, and it measures like 50 different things. And we have a new database for our cases that we use. I'm looking at telling a story of, well, you invest in this database I'm going to show you. Or we recruit these kind of volunteers. We change our training. We have a different screening processes. We make things online. We get a new website. That I'm going to tell you that we're going to increase our amount of volunteers. I'm going to diversify their age spread basically. We're looking at the race and ethnicity and disproportionality of the population that we serve, and our staff, and our volunteers. I could swim in data all day long. And figuring out how to measure wellbeing. What does it mean to not go to school hungry? How can you measure that? I love figuring that out. How does that correlate?

AJ Renold: So I would say to our board, telling the story of what we do and where the gaps are to our board is very much based on data. You can manipulate data, but the data that we use doesn't lie. I can tell you that we increased our volunteers by 80% last year. That's because we invested in recruitment. We call advertising 'recruitment money'.

Allison Prince: There you go.

Justin Bullock: That is excellent marketing.

Theresa M.: Very good.

Allison Prince: You could call it harvesting money.

AJ Renold: Right. But knowing those numbers, you have to have the technology to be able to keep up with that kind of data and attract where your volunteers live. What are their ages? And knowing how to read demographic data, census data. I'm a sociology major. I have a journalism graduate degree. Nowhere does that say you're going to be an executive at a non-profit, but they go together. Teaching research and communication to people who are interested in working for non-profits or leading in non-profits, those two things are key skills to have to manage any business. But it just worked out that I also am very passionate about serving the community with volunteers, which means you have to be really resourceful to do that.

AJ Renold: I learned to love data and measuring things. Donors don't know enough about non-profits to ask those kind of questions. Like how do you measure your success? I can say, for me, the cost of serving one child with an advocate for a whole year is \$2,000. That's a whole year of one person monitoring a whole situation for a year. And I can say what that can compare to the cost of a child in foster care for the state, for the federal government, and I do it cheaper than other Casa programs. So knowing all of that, it's not just me, but I'm going to compare myself to everything else going around to make that argument.

Theresa M.: We were just on a call with a George Bush ... I don't know. We made it to phase two of the George Bush Library Foundation whatever.

Will Brown: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Theresa M.: So this group, jeesh, thank goodness they gave us questions ahead of time because I had my program staff doing it, and it was like, "Where do you see your organization in five years?" Like big, high-level stuff. So I was like, "I've got to get on this call," like five minutes before this call. But they asked a lot about outcomes. They do not care about demographics. They did not care about all the stuff that we track and have been tracking forever. They want to know outcomes. And I was like, "Well, I'm going to be honest about it. We know with

screen and intervene AC1 levels have gone down for these diabetics." I'm like, "This is preliminary, you know."

Theresa M.: But like they said, it takes a certain skillset to really look at the data and prove causality. I mean, come on, there's all kinds of factors out there. And I'm very one of those people that are like, "I want to say that this is because of what we did." Long time ago a professor at A&M helped us evaluate the backpack program, and he literally had students go do face to face interviews with kids that receive the food-filled backpacks. And this data was amazing. So when you said the wellbeing or how the food was used or who they shared it with. It wasn't what they liked. It wasn't process. It wasn't satisfaction. It was impact.

Theresa M.: Grant money ran out. Student left. I got left with a whole bunch of data that has not been crunched. Don't know how to crunch it. Don't have the software to do it. And it's old now, so it's not as relevant. But it was so rich. So amazing.

Will Brown: So disappointing. Like, "Oh, we could run the data."

Theresa M.: [crosstalk 00:45:46] work to train these volunteers to talk to five-year-olds about food. And these kids are like, "I know my parents are stressed out."

Will Brown: And they told their story.

Theresa M.: Yes.

Justin Bullock: Yeah. That's awesome. That's really interesting.

Theresa M.: And I was like, "What happened?" My husband's a professor at A&M. I know what happens to grant money, but I didn't like it.

Justin Bullock: So we're coming up towards the end. We've been going for 45 minutes.

AJ Renold: We just started.

Justin Bullock: I know, we did just start. Right? Conversations are so great at Bush School Uncorked that you don't even realize the time flies by. There are four of you including Will here that have decided in some part to dedicate your lives to non-profits, as opposed to any other types of things you could have done. So my question is why? What's your pitch? Why bother working in a non-profit. We've talked about how hard it is, how you're fighting for resources, how it's a struggle, how you have to have all these skills that you have that are now marketable that you could do other things with. So there's some reason why you decided non-profit. So as we close out, I want to know why go into non-profits? Why did you choose to do that?

Theresa M.: Did we all choose that? I know I did. I did.

Justin Bullock: Or why do you remain? It can be either. Maybe you accidentally ended up, but you're choosing to stay for some reason.

Allison Prince: Well, I came back to grad school to work in non-profits. I don't know where it was. I was 23 maybe. 23, 24 years old. Why I chose to come back was that I was working for a for-profit selling something.

Theresa M.: Selling something. I love that.

Allison Prince: Selling something. I was selling custom designed closets. Talk about a shift from that to non-profit. But that was really it was. It was Katrina, Rita hit. And I'm driving around the DFW metroplex trying to sell people a custom designed closet that's beautiful enough to have a chandelier in it. Which don't get me wrong, I'm not judging anybody on their choices. Some day I hope to have a chandelier in my closet myself. But I just had this, "Wow, people are literally sitting on their rooftops not sure whether or not they're going to make it to even see tomorrow. So what am I doing with my life?"

Allison Prince: And I kind of had this idea of like I always knew I wanted to be a mom some day. I wasn't. I wasn't even married at the time. But I was like, "You know what? If I'm going to work full-time," because a lot of moms have to work, "If I'm going to work full-time it's going to take me away from being at home with kids and raising children at home," or whatever, "it better damn well be more than just a salary. It's got to have more meaning to that." And somewhere that took me on the path back here, and here I am today.

Justin Bullock: Here you are. That's great. I like that one.

Allison Prince: But I do question the life dedication. I missed the ceremony when that happened [crosstalk 00:48:48] life to this.

Justin Bullock: Well, in some part when you've been doing it some amount of time it becomes a large part of-

Theresa M.: She hasn't been doing it as long [crosstalk 00:48:56]

Allison Prince: I'm at like 13 years now that I've been working in non-profits.

Justin Bullock: This is how I feel coming up on six years at A&M. At some point it becomes part of who you are and your identity and what you've dedicated.

Allison Prince: Actually, a board member asked me that today. She asked me, "What are you thinking?" And I was like, "Well, I can't really see myself doing anything else." I'm not going to go take a job selling stuff again.

- Justin Bullock: Yeah, done with that. You tried that one. That's very good. Thank you. Anyone else?
- Theresa M.: Yeah. Well, not to get all personal, but there's some personal stories with how I grew up that have impacted my values and what I care about. I'm very passionate about justice. I've actually done some of the kind of work that AJ's done. I ran a sexual assault child advocacy center in Georgia. That was my first executive director job. And then my husband got a position here at A&M. And we moved here. And the food bank became open, and I was like, "Well, I could push food around." But it's very different. I'm so far away from the actual person that we're impacting.
- Allison Prince: We are too.
- Theresa M.: Yeah. So what I'm saying is non-profit is all I'm going to ever do. I don't know anything other. My family is from Flint, Michigan. All they did was work for General Motors in factories. That's what you do. I'm the first to graduate from college. I'm from a different whatever. That's what's important to me. The passion for justice you can get in a non-profit. Even if you're pushing paper, doing reports, you have to still do the same thing, but it's not for the chandelier in the closet, I'm sorry. It's for a child that needs food on the weekend so they can learn on Monday. It's really satisfying to be able to say that.
- Theresa M.: I use it probably too much, if my husband was listening, to not be at home, to make an excuse to work too much. But it can be addicting. It really can be addicting to make an impact as one person. I don't know how to say it any other way than that.
- Justin Bullock: No, that's very helpful.
- Theresa M.: I don't know what I'll do next.
- Allison Prince: You're a non-profit addict.
- Theresa M.: Yeah, when my husband retires and we can go, well, I will do whatever. He can go play his banjo somewhere, and I'm going to do something else in a non-profit, probably not fundraising.
- Allison Prince: Does that exist in non-profits to not fundraise? I'd like to find that position.
- Theresa M.: Yes. If you can be in a state association [crosstalk 00:51:41]
- Will Brown: [crosstalk 00:51:42] folk music banjo group [crosstalk 00:51:44]
- Theresa M.: Yes. But I'm not fundraising for it or managing it.

Will Brown: But that's what they really need.

Justin Bullock: That's awesome.

Theresa M.: How do you follow that? Follow the banjo.

AJ Renold: I would say it's been kind of ingrained in me since I was born, this passion for service, and the connection, the fulfillment I get out of fixing problems, which I know a lot of people in the for-profit sector do the same thing. But it's almost like being a social engineer because you compound the complexity of human nature onto it. I love solving problems, and this is like the biggest problem ever to make a disconnected world reconnect and give back with nothing in return other than that you're helping another human being. That's a pretty big problem. And I love the challenge of being resourceful and figuring out realistic ways to solve problems, and doing right by other people, especially those that are not represented well in the legal system in society. I just care a lot about other people, and I want to do right by them. So you can do that in a for-profit world, but non-profit, using volunteers to do that, people who are giving of their own time to do that, it gives me the flexibility to work with volunteers when I'm not working for government or within the constraints of a for-profit organization that's dependent on making a profit. I like the flexibility of it.

AJ Renold: We have laws and polices and bylaws and all that within the organization, but we're flexible enough because we're in this human sector of trying to solve a problem with little resources. So I like the ability to be creative with that. And it works. So as long as I'm being challenged and there is a way out, there's a way I can always see. Child abuse will always occur. Not going away. But there are things in place that we can figure out through research and utilizing the community and informing the community about what it looks like and how to prevent it and all of that, that we can gradually make an impact in our community locally, and then even globally if we want to. I have that freedom. I feel like I have a lot of power in the non-profit sector.

Justin Bullock: Very good. Thank you.

Will Brown: How did I end up here?

Justin Bullock: Yeah. Why non-profits? You could've been a public management scholar, and instead you're doing non-profits.

Will Brown: I could be in business administration. Right?

Allison Prince: [inaudible 00:54:49]

Will Brown: I was [crosstalk 00:54:49]

Will Brown: We're at the end. We're at the end. It's okay. Who wouldn't want to work with an amazing group of people like this?

Justin Bullock: I agree. It's been a lot of fun.

Will Brown: I mean, in short, when you listen, all of what you just said captures part of why I work in this space. I'm fascinated by the complexity of the organization. I want to feel like there's something different that you give and you contribute, and that you're making a difference, and you're having an impact on people's lives, and that it's a positive impact. It's all of that. Right? And they're fascinating people to work with. I feel like it becomes a part of a community. And I hope that part of what we do with the school is helping people think. We have hundreds of students that want to be a part of what's going on in the field. And to be a little bit a part of helping them think about the way that they prepare themselves to be effective and talented leaders. If they could be any shadow of what these three folks are doing I would feel very honored to be a part of contributing to their professional development.

Justin Bullock: Well, I'm not going to try to follow that. Thank you. Thank you so much to the panel.

AJ Renold: [crosstalk 00:56:04]

Justin Bullock: They were not given a lot of prep time, some I think no prep time essentially was what they had today. So what is prep time?

Will Brown: That's the way we do it.

Justin Bullock: Yeah. Just kind of on the fly. Keeps things real. Right? Okay. Thanks. All right. We will be recording again next week on October 29th at 6:00 PM at Downtown Uncorked in historic Downtown Bryan. We'll have two academic guests. Greg will be back. Will has been a wonderful cohost. You were quiet.

Will Brown: Quiet. I was a quiet cohost.

Justin Bullock: You let me do all the talking. That's the exact kind of cohost I want.

Will Brown: Yeah, it wasn't easy.

Justin Bullock: Thanks to Downtown Uncorked for hosting us tonight. Thanks for the audience who was able to join us out here on this wonderful Tuesday evening.

Allison Prince: Tuesday. It's only Tuesday.

Justin Bullock: Oh man, it is only Tuesday. And thank you so much for listening. Hope you join us again next time. Thank you.

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