

## Volunteerism

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### ***Opening music***

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Your'e listening to Tilting the Earth's Praxis, a weekly discussion of important issues that impact civil society. With host Salvatore Alaimo.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

Hello and welcome to Tilting the Earth's Praxis. This week's episode is on volunteerism. Uh, I'm going to introduce our esteemed guests. Dr. Lucas Meijs is Professor of Strategic Philanthropy and Volunteering with the Department of Business Society Management, Rotterdam School of Management. And he's coming to us all the way from The Netherlands. Dr. Meijs has published in multiple journals, including *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Voluntas*, *Voluntary Sector Review* and others. He has a book chapter in the book, *A Research Agenda for Civil Society*, and he also volunteers by serving on boards of nonprofits. Welcome, Lucas.

### ***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

Thank you.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

Faiza Venzant is the executive director of the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration. She has over 20 years of experience leading a volunteer engagement, and she served as facilitator for the Community Action Poverty Simulation. She's the recipient of the 2022 June Calwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism and Excellence in Volunteer Engagement. And in 2019, she was a recipient of the Impact Award in Canada for Exemplary Volunteer Leadership. She earned her certification in volunteer administration in 2016. Welcome, Faiza.

### ***Faiza Venzant***

Hi, welcome.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

And we have Megan Cadle. She is Director of Volunteer and Alumni Engagement for the American College of Financial Services. Megan has over ten years' experience in volunteer management, previously working for Give Kids the World, Make-A-Wish and Hospice, Michigan. Megan is an alumni of Grand Valley State University. She earned her master's of public administration here, and she got her CVA credential in 2018. Welcome, Megan.

### ***Megan Cadle***

Thank you for having e this morning.

**Salvatore Alaimo**

Thank all of you for being here. I want to pivot to you, Lucas, to begin to get this. Being that you are a global expert on this topic to get a global perspective. So, I spent six months in the Czech Republic, and I was awestruck when I would ask high school and graduate students if they volunteer. And not many hands went up. And I quickly realized that 34 years out of the Soviet system, while their civil society is progressing nicely forward. They. A lot of people don't volunteer there. So, it's not a social norm in the way it is in the United States. So, help us understand what are some of the factors that go into whether volunteerism becomes a social norm in a country?

**Dr. Lucas Meijs**

Thanks. Wow, that's a good question, but a complex one. So, let me start with the example you gave of the Czech Republic. We did a European study. Where we also had the opportunity to ask the people in Croatia, is not the same country, but in the same neighborhood, same problem. And it was very clear in Croatia, about 9% of the population volunteers. And nobody complains about the shortage of volunteering of volunteers. In the Netherlands we're about between 40 46%. And we complain as math men about not having, you know, not having enough volunteers. So, there's something interesting. We had a debate on what is happening, and we see two things. And one thing is it's about opportunity structures. So, the example I used at my, at my college in Croatia is that in the Netherlands we have ambulances, also food. We call them food pantries for house pets. So, food banks for house pets. So where. Which is interesting and my colleague in Croatia goes like, "Lucas, this is not a short supply. This is just too much, too many." I mean, he can afford to have food banks for animals. Who complains about not having enough volunteers? So that's one thing it's about. Well, the energy and then the opportunity structure, and not all countries have opportunity structures. The US have a huge opportunity structure it's impossible not to volunteer. The Netherlands and Sweden. We all have huge opportunity structures might be different, might be sports like in the Netherlands and Finland, where volunteering is most dominant might be something else. Then the second story to make is about what do we see happening? So, second conversation with my colleagues there was about if you look at COVID and the Ukraine crisis, we see all these spontaneous eruptions of volunteering, which are hardly well organized, but people do something. So, the volunteer energy is there. It's never gone, it's quite human to help. But indeed, some of these categories have simply no structure where you can put into action. So, the helpful thing is it's everywhere. And the interesting thing is people like volunteer administrators can start organizing. But, it's becoming more spontaneous, less controlled, less managed. And it is a big difference if we and I will stop, make a difference between either you or volunteer because you want to help lot of people in need or you will do self-organized your own sports or your own whatever kind of hobby or. And, so we want to give voice to do something right. And these are also three different ways that you see how this also highly different that.

**Salvatore Alaimo**

I want to build off of that because you and my former mentor, Jeffrey Brudney, have published some works where you two have called volunteerism a natural resource, a renewable resource. Can you explain that to us?

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

Yeah. So it will be the step you make there. We just had also a new form upgrade of articles that we separate volunteer energy from actually volunteering. And volunteer energy is the willingness of people to, to do something. And as I just said, also in Croatia and in Poland where volunteerism is low, volunteer energy is high. If something happens that we did earthquake a red some years ago in Zagreb, Croatia showed they all come. So, what we show is that there is a kind of spindle laying. Energy source that needs to be tapped. And in that tapping and organizing stars be the art of the trade or the management of volunteers. Because there we see a lot of things going wrong. So, we the first article we compare sorry for the that of all the volunteer administrators sometimes clinging to the world as if they are this business looking for the last resource they can use and they better misuse that before it. Misuse a resource, then give it to someone else. And that, of course, is not good for the future of wanting sovereign debt. That when we compare it to a kind of what we call the Church of the Commons, evolved to energy to kind of cool, cool. Everybody can ask the same people to volunteer. And certainly hiring is gone. There is no grass, etc., etc. And we see the volunteering goes down now locally. The first article we see there is no generation conflict or possibility. So if you look at national, these are resources. There is a difference between flow resources and if you catch all the dodos, if you catch all the herring, there will be no herring in the future anymore. I wish you would support all the volunteers you would with treat them and it would tell the kids, don't volunteer. But luckily volunteering is much more like a like a stock market like flow resource. It will come. They will come right at the. Always will new volunteers come in, but you can really, really spoil the future. Volunteer energy. I mismanage, but little bit like you can spoil the, the future of a forest cutting down too many trees. Or cutting down the trees too early. They're not taken care for. There is also a space where they can recover and things like that.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Now, Faiza, Lucas just mentioned those that manage volunteers. I think this is where you come in being the executive director of CCVA. I'm not sure that many Americans still in 2023 would understand that Volunteer ministration or a.k.a. volunteer management is a profession. Can you elaborate on that and tell us what CCVA is all about?

***Faiza Venzant***

Absolutely. And I'm going to pick up a little bit on what Lucas also mentioned around it being human to help. And it is human to help. It's also human to organize. And so, you have a profession of leaders, of volunteers, volunteer administrators, volunteer engagement professionals. We go by so many different names. And, you know, our goal at the Council for Certification and Volunteer Administration is to advocate for ethical practice, right? Understanding that leaders of volunteers are often a conduit who work in partnership with communities and who galvanize citizens and communities to work

together. Right, for those who are underrepresented under prioritized. And what we're trying to do is we're trying to build up a profession that sees that as a responsibility, that recognizes the competencies that are unique to us as professionals. And um, Meghan and I are both CVS, you know and making that bridge so that you don't have you don't have individuals who have a terrible experience with volunteering. And on the flip side, what's more important is that we don't have community members who receive volunteerism in a way that's harmful. And when we talk about this idea of it being human to help and we think about, you know, you know, two key things that Lucas has mentioned, the crisis in Ukraine and say COVID, for example. Now, volunteerism in Western countries is very much based on colonial values of individualism and recognition. Right. And in indigenous cultures and, you know, non, non-religious faith I'll say non-Abrahamic faiths. People call this energy and this action. We call it sharing and we call it equal disbursement, their word volunteering or the energy around volunteering, meaning formalized civil structures around community participation that don't exist. It's just something that you do. And so, it really resonates with me. You know, Lucas talks about countries that have lower rates of volunteerism, who also report lower rates of volunteer vacancies. It's because people just show up and do you know what they're supposed to do or what we're allowed to do? What we feel is our civic responsibility, you know, and unfortunately, in some cultures, you know, where you have volunteerism and you have that need for humans to help and humans to organize, you start to create layers and you start to create barriers for participation. And so, when you have professional leaders of volunteer, what we're trying to do is, you know, make sure those professional leaders of volunteers understand the great responsibility that they have in playing a role in helping to solve the issues of healthy communities and safe communities in doing that. No, Megan, if you. If you wanted to. If I'm. If I'm capturing what we do correctly Megan or not.

### ***Megan Cadle***

No, you are. And it's it's interesting because over the years, you know, so many times people are they when they hear what my job title is, you know, something with volunteer coordinator, volunteer manager, they assume I'm a volunteer myself and they just assume I'm doing this. You know, a few hours here and there and they're like, Oh, that's so nice of you to give your time. And, you know, I've done a lot of education. I know, you know, this is my full time job. This is what I'm here to do for this organization is, you know, utilize our volunteer resources in the best capacity. And so much education also has to go on the flipside to other staff members at organizations, because we always joke, they always think that we have like this garden or a tree in the back of our building that we can just go get volunteers from. And that's not the case. There's just like it takes a lot of energy and effort to steward a new donor to bring in financial resources. We do the exact same thing on the flip side, for volunteers. There's a lot that goes into recruiting, retaining volunteers, and it's something that still, even though we've made huge strides here in just the last ten years I've been in the sector, there's still a lot more that we need to do to educate the staff, but also the community of what a volunteer manager ties in, what our role is. Because the more people know, the more they value the volunteers and all of the all the efforts and resources that are dedicated to them.

**Salvatore Alaimo**

Megan, I want to follow up on that. You've worked in the field and a number of organizations. Can you give us some examples of just how important volunteers have been to those organizations?

**Megan Cadle**

Oh, my goodness. The first one that comes to mind is I worked for Give Kids the World, which is a nonprofit resort down in central Florida, and they had a staff of about 150 to 200 staff. Well, we called 1800 volunteer shifts a week. They helped do everything from helping serve our meals to how we had our pride activities that were commissioned by volunteers. They would greet our families as they arrived. They were the backbone. And what I really loved about working that organization is there was a culture among the entire staff that really valued the volunteers. So, we had appreciation and recognition of all the staff or turnout, and that's really hard to sell find organizations. It's definitely turning, but I think a lot of times staff don't necessarily see the value because a lot of the work that we do is behind the scenes. They don't see all the different the that's, I would say, stewardship that we're doing with volunteers to make sure they're coming back, making sure they have a good experience. Sometimes I'll have staff say, oh I just need someone to come in and stuff envelopes, but they don't necessarily think of, you know, Hey, we got to get the envelopes, we got to have the labels, we got to have the volunteer, we got to have space, we got to have all these pieces. And so, I think that's one of the biggest misconceptions that we're still facing as people think that all of this stuff is just magically happening and it's not. You know, we're looking at where we're going to place a volunteer work and have a good experience. They don't want them to come in to an office and not have somebody and not utilize them. And the flipside, some organizations have I believe it was Lucas you were talking about like stockpile volunteers. They want to have an abundance of volunteers. And that's not good either, because you're not going to give them that that great experience and make them want to come back again in the future.

**Dr. Lucas Meijs**

And the question is even more complex. You don't want them to only call back to you, but you might have an opportunity or an obligation to make sure they go back to volunteering. That's even that's a higher level. We will try to make the separation between your volunteer journey, within an organization and the lifespan of volunteering. Which is maybe even more. The starting point of the article with Jeff was that we see organizations only caring about the volunteer journey. Exploiting volunteers till the end is in sight. They decide, "I'll never volunteer again." And that, of course. That's the biggest risk of bad volunteer management. Not thinking about the future. And, indeed, organizations try to exploit. Volunteers and the ethical stage comes into play.

**Faiza Venzant**

And, I think in our practice and in what we do as professionals, even Lucas, probably much of what you study and you instruct and teach on, you know, we, we often forget the community that's being served and we focus very much on the volunteer cycle and

the volunteer journey, and we forget that we have a responsibility also to try to change the hearts and minds of the community that we engage to understand why we need them to volunteer in the first place. Right? So what systems and what structures are in place that are require us to have charitable systems and organizations that need to partner with and serve the community. And we do a disservice to the community. We retraumatize and re harm the community, and we create this cycle of work for ourselves. And so, I want to mention that because I think that over the last few years, you know, in the United States, in Western countries, particularly with the murder of George Floyd, we're seeing a bit of a shift and we're seeing that there is a social justice component to working with and leading volunteers. And, you know, one of the things I'm hearing more and more which my colleagues in in other parts of the world will say, well, why are you thinking about that? That's something we've thought about all the time, is that we're thinking about how do we involve the communities that we serve in their own liberation, Right? And they're embracing ours. Right.

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

It's a big difference between that say to you was a context that works in Europe and other countries where, okay, we're membership base. So in our charge we talk about communities, plural and see that people are part of community and they work together to organize their own kind of thing, which in many cases will be just sports. Or. recreation, but could also be giving yourself voice or solidarity kind of thing within the group. So, it's very American to, to think about let's rephrase this, very different administrative perspective, think about we have to serve needy people. Instead of think about we have a kind of group who helps each other. And it's very interesting difference in how you approach volunteer management, because if you have a membership organization, recruitment becomes much more like we know the people. By name by nametag and whatever. But how do we get them to even spread around work?

***Faiza Venzant***

So that it can be involved. You know, how do you how do you involve your, the community that you partner with and that you serve in solutions that will benefit them? Right. And so I see this shift in volunteerism in America. And I'm a recent immigrant to the United States as well, from Canada, where we have a lot of similarities. But, I see that as really exciting and something that I'm hoping, you know, we see more energy towards. And I hope people see this, you know, as a profession that is a social justice profession. That's not an administrative, you know, profession. It's not we often get lumped in with the fundraisers. We're not just, you know, people who harvest resources. There is a social justice, very big social justice component to what we do. We are that bridge between, you know, an organization with a ton of resources and a community that is seeking those resources and that there's a huge power and responsibility there.

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

So one of the things we took away, sorry Sal, go ahead.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

I just want to jump in here and just really hammer the point home and extend on Megan's examples, because I think it could get lost on all of us. I've made and I say all of us, I mean, not just the four of us, but the public, just the important role volunteers play. When you think of the American Red Cross without volunteers, they don't exist. An organization I worked for for seven and a half years, the Girl Scouts without volunteers, they don't exist. And then staff actually takes on more of the administrative supportive role. And the volunteers are really the ones running the show. And, I just want to read some statistics here from this study done by the Do Good Institute at the University of Maryland. This was done in 2022. Just published in February. The percentage of nonprofit CEOs who believe, quote, to a great extent, "the volunteers allow the organization to provide more detailed attention to the people served" has increased from 37% in 2019 to 65.6% in 2022. And the percentage of those same CEOs, nonprofit CEOs who believe, quote, to a great extent, "the volunteers increase the organization's return on its resource investments" has increased from 43% to 68.4% over that same four-year period. That's astounding. So clearly, these folks are saying what we're saying here today. Yes, volunteer resources are critically important. So, what can the three of you say and you've kind of started this already, but what advice do you have so that nonprofits can better understand this importance, but more importantly, better understand the recommended practice of the profession so those volunteer resources are managed efficiently and effectively?

***Faiza Venzant***

I think that, you know. Because of my profession and where I sit, I often hear leaders of volunteers saying, you know, we've been given this mandate of diversifying our volunteer base now. And one of the things that we need to think about is leaders of volunteers are not experts in equity, justice and inclusion. And so, these efforts have to be holistic within an organization. They have to be embedded in policies and practices that affect the whole organization. They have to be part of a human resources in hiring practices. They have to be part of the pipeline for leadership. You know, those statistics that you just recalled, Salvatore, are amazing. But equally, you know, what's also happening is we don't see that diversity in terms of, you know, CEOs can recognize that this is important, but there isn't a lot of diversity when it comes to who CEOs are and what they look like. And there isn't a ton of diversity when it comes to our profession either. Right? So I'm really lucky to be working with Arizona State University and a Mark Hager. They're on a study of assessing diversity and equity and volunteer involvement, and we're looking at who leads volunteers. And when we look at that, we see that there. You know, our profession is not very diverse, you know, when it comes to life experience, when it comes to ethnicity, race, religion, all kinds of all kinds of dimensions. And so, there really needs to be a very intentional and an a long commitment. This isn't a project or a task. This is something that will always be ongoing to thinking about how do we make access to volunteerism equitable for everybody, and how do we make access to this passion equitable to everybody and not just our profession, but all of those professions within the charitable sector, whether it be in leadership, in accounting, in teaching and instructing, all of those. We need to see the community that is being serve reflected in the people who are making decisions.

Unfortunately for that community and not always in partnership with that community. That's my thought. I think it's a, it's a bigger picture thing.

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

So, we, we translate these numbers in, in a different kind of discussion and the discussion moves to away from, let's say, the cost savings kind of things or volunteers to the question what brings all these bring to the plate that evaporates when, when you start paying them. So, and that changes the discussion organization because there is no replacement question anymore. Like could it also be paid job because then it becomes something very, very unique and it has to do with the relation volunteers can have with the decline of the artist in a different way. They are perceived as having knowledge from experience instead of knowledge from books and set, etc. So, we think that certainly every organization play around in our interventions on which part should be done by volunteers, because volunteers can do that one the best and which part should be done by paid staff, because then you need, for example authority or official power and things like that, and then you move away or to a different level of really creating value for your community by separating what should volunteers do, what should be staff to and move away from the idea we don't have money to pay everybody. It is a poor excuse to work to implement this. Right. And that's the first thing. The second thing is that that's a debate between countries. The solution in many other countries to represent people in the organizations is to create separate organizations. Where you have your own leadership and then you go more to the all volunteer organizations. And, and this mutual support, mutual benefit kind of thing. And it's very interesting to see the role of volunteer administrators there because you're much more like (inaudible). This equal within the others that in the classical way of looking at and volunteering administrators and things like that make very interesting.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Yeah. I want to build off of Lucas's point. Megan, could you share with us what you see as some of the value that volunteers bring to an organization? Sort of like what Lucas is saying, This is more than just a free labor mindset, which I would agree with him is can be toxic in an organization and counterproductive. What are some of the the things or the value propositions that volunteers can bring to an organization?

***Megan Cadle***

I mean, there's so much that they can bring. But the one thing I really am seeing in my current position where a lot of the volunteers I work with are very high level financial services professionals and they're, you know, sitting on different advisory councils and boards for our organization. They're bringing their networks to us. They're helping us connect to the community, figure out what the community needs, what new training designations do they need in the financial services background. That's what they're bringing to us. They're also bringing, you know, their, their professional experience and backgrounds. They're helping us redesign courses and figure out what we need to do going forward. And it's not just the volunteers who come in and seal envelopes, answer phones or man the front desk. It's a really high level caliber of volunteers. And I really I love that. I love seeing a different approach to volunteers. And I just need we just need



a warm body. I really think it's we're definitely moving towards that direction overall as a whole sector, but definitely seeing the value that volunteers bring that they can connect, you know, their time, talent, treasures, all these different things volunteers can bring in instead of begin just looking at them for one body. Let's look at them for all that they have in their unique backgrounds that they bring perspectives. And that's something I think I've also seen a shift in volunteers when they come. They want to use their, their background. They want to use their talents where before that was something you didn't necessarily see, they again expected you to kind of put them in that, you know, your normal, you know, one through five, you know, different volunteer opportunities here. Here they are, where do you want to go? But now it's so much more. You're seeing their next generation of volunteers say, I'm an accountant, I'm paid fundraising, peer pressure. How can I use my skillset to help your organization, which is a great thing to have, but it also presents a challenge because you got to find new and unique opportunities for them so that they are engaged and they have that really good experience. Or on the flip side, can you help connect them to another organization within the community that they can use their skill sets? Because that's something I hear is they don't want to just bring a volunteer in and I build to utilize them to the extent. And that's something I've seen for years in volunteer management and it is slowly shifting. But I think part of my responsibility as a volunteer manager is to know what's out there in the community so that I can refer them to other organizations that we don't have the right. But that's okay. To me, it's okay to say, you know what, I don't have the right volunteer bit, but this other organization on the street does and I think you might work really well. Be really helpful for them when we connect you with their volunteer manager.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

I like that because that really helps us move towards the idea. Lucas was talking about this stock of energy, making it a natural, renewable resource. And it also, I think it helps bring community together, right? I'm sure Megan, you know, the other volunteer managers in your field and in your air and your community and, you know, there may be some process referral going amongst you that can move us more towards this stock of a natural renewable energy ideal that Lucas was talking about. Faiza, what can you add to that in terms of well, from I guess from your job at CCVA. What are you seeing out there today as some of the major challenges for volunteer managers, volunteer administrators?

### ***Faiza Venzant***

I think one of the biggest challenges is, yeah, this expectation for a leader of volunteers to wear many more hats than they already do, right? So, to be an expert in database management, to be an expert in equity and inclusion, to also be an expert in fundraising and event planning. And, you know, there are very specific competencies that that make a leader of volunteers successful and specialized in what we do. And again, you know, what Meghan was talking about earlier is just bringing more awareness to what this profession is and what we do and not letting that get muddled with what, what other things are out there. And you know that there are other subject matter experts that should be leading equity or that should be leading fundraising or should be leading

events. I think that's one of the big challenges. I'm the second one, you know, that I'm really seeing a lot of, especially as we are, what I call still coming out of COVID is just massive burnout. You know, so many leaders of volunteers have faced a lot of their own economic and health uncertainty as, as many of us did, you know, in the world, you know, and so and, and many of us are just really burnt out, especially those of us who worked in long term care, health care, hospice, where we were redeployed and doing different things, where we had to let our volunteers go for a little while and really lose that identity of what we did and now are struggling to, to bring people back. You know, I think that's a that burnout is a real struggle. And another one that I see and I'll end there is, is just that this is a very gendered profession. You know, the majority of CVA's are those who identify as women and the majority of our profession around the world is is pretty much reflective of that as well. And there are still so many gender inequities that exist globally. And so you have a progression of women who are also caregivers for elderly parents, who are also raising young children and who are also trying to have a career at the same time and, and who historically are paid less than, you know, in heterosexual partnerships than their partners. And so, for a lot what I see a lot of it is I see a lot of women in our profession leaving and having to make the choice to leave because they have other familial responsibilities, because they can make more money elsewhere or because the money that they make doesn't outweigh what it cost to raise their family. And as a profession, you know, I would love to see that that gender inequality change. And I think, you know, as a society, when we think about helping people, we still think about that as being women's work. And, and I see that and very much reflected in our profession.

### **Salvatore Alaimo**

Lucas, I want to pivot back to you to think about the global macro context, which is sort of where we begin in today's discussion. I'm wondering how important history can be to serve to remind us of the importance of volunteerism. I'm thinking of the American context with the most of the Continental Army that overthrew the British being volunteers. I'm thinking of the suffragettes who got women the right to vote. I'm thinking of the volunteers who risked and some who lost their lives in the Civil Rights Movement to get African-Americans the right to vote. Can history be a good teacher to remind us of just how important volunteerism is?

### **Dr. Lucas Meijs**

Oh, yes. History is a good teacher from that perspective. Big change happens because people want to do something which you find important. Well, this question I have with my students is so you find something very important and you're not going to do it because they don't pay you? You wait. You don't find important, right? It would be doing this this monster run on sustainability. You find the environment the important do something also if you not pay. Now that that's the big thing behind this whole idea that if you care for something, you do it. And what we do see, of course, respect it is the new groups. I mean, I talk to my students. I'm at a business school. We talk about "boycotting" instead of boycotts. They don't see the "buycott" as a kind of collective action, but they see the individual perspective of buying copy, which is buying something that's better for the environment. So, we have discussions about but by

clothing is very individual. We go back to Faiza's remark. How do we make it collective? How do we move the individual to buy copy to a buycott or a boycott, which means So then we have nice discussions about how can you grow this movement? If I said etcetera. And I think there's a doubt that I'm a very helpful person if I talk to my students. Wow. But I need community organizers because they think awareness building is already enough. But that's not enough, correct? Right. Much more to it, too, to go from individual action, individual ideas to doing something. And that's really where the volunteering happens, to be honest. So Faiza, you're totally right. This collective is organized.

***Faiza Venzant***

Yeah, and I love this idea that you talk about, like community awareness is important, and I'm so excited for my kids because when I was growing up, globalization was like a buzzword, right? And now we're living it and we have the most aware youth, We have the most aware young generation ever.

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

Yes.

***Faiza Venzant***

But we need to translate that awareness into action right

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

Oh, we have to help them.

***Faiza Venzant***

And they've grown up in a you know, they've grown up knowing that, you know, the world is much smaller for them and they can connect and, you know, and travel is not a privilege. Travel is, is a right, right. And connecting with each other globally is a norm. But then at the same time, we've got this generation of people who think that activism is liking a post or this idea of cancel culture. Right. And that's not their fault, right? We don't want to be that. And I don't know if you guys know that. Like in the Mike and The Mechanics song In the Living Years. And there's a line in that song that says that every generation blames the one before. And, you know, I don't blame this generation. It's the tools that our generation developed that that have allowed this right. But at the same time, we need to harness all that energy and that awareness into action.

***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

And start to really see the challenge. Yeah, volunteer administrators need be less focused on these numbers , but much more of this energy and facilitating, and we call it now nano philanthropy and micro volunteering. Then finding ways of changing this into collective action, right?

***Faiza Venzant***

Absolutely. And, you know, you said it, Salvatore, that history is a teacher and it absolutely is, that history can also really restrict you because you can it can restrict you

in terms of wanting to innovate and think of new ways to do things. And, you know, for as much for as much as COVID was difficult and disruptive and heartbreaking for so many people. I think that all that forced so many of us to innovate and to try new things. And I think that there's this energy now from that innovation that we will carry forward with us. And I'm excited about, you know, using things like artificial intelligence and ChatGPT when it comes to galvanizing communities and working together and not being afraid of those things, but just sort of saying, let me learn about it. Let me have some curiosity about it and see, you know, how can we use these tools and resources in the very end, right? Because all of this then has to center on these community outcomes, right? So how do we use this awareness building and transform it into action? How do we use these new tools and resources and transform it into impact for the community at the end of the day?

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

Megan, I want to ask you a question. You've worked for several organizations. Can you can you share with us some examples of things from the management and leadership of those organizations that have worked well to enable you to be your best as a volunteer administrator and maybe some of the negative things that have hindered your ability to be your best?

### ***Megan Cadle***

Well, I'm going to flip the question and go with the negatives first? The one thing that I really had to go right back to is I previously worked for a hospice organization and a lot of people are very aware of Medicare has guidelines that 5% of hospice care asked to be provided by volunteers in the U.S. And that's it's great because it forces organizations to have volunteers, but again, it forces them. It doesn't make it that you want to. You have to. So there's this requirement there and there's a lot of rules of what can and can't count towards your 5% for volunteer hours. So, it forces you to not innovative, forces you to go with the same old programs year after year because both the key account towards that 5% and we shouldn't bother doing it and I hate that and during COVID that was one of the the nice things that came out of COVID was that that cause was gone. We didn't have to follow those 5% rule. So, we were able to innovate. We're able to create new programs and do things that we'd never done and deliver care in different ways. We had to start doing visits over Zoom, which is something we'd never had done before. So, you know, all those guidelines and rules were they can be great to give some structure because I'm very type A. I like that structure, but it does also hinder you. It doesn't give you the ability to kind of create new programs. And I think we're voluntary managers can really thrive in organizations is with leadership that really sees the value in volunteers and dedicates resources to volunteer management, because that's one of the things that I think we're still lagging behind is people expect you to be able to bring in new volunteers. I appreciate your volunteers, but no budget. They, they just assume it's volunteers. It's free labor. We don't need to dedicate anything new. You need to have the staff that in supporter. You need to be able to give appreciation. You know, during the National Volunteer Week over the holidays, different things like that. It's not just something you can just kind of waiting and hope that it goes well. If it takes a lot of effort and resources and organizations that don't see value in that, it's a recipe for

disaster because you're going to try to bring on volunteers, but you're not going to have the, the structures in place to adequately manage them and grow. And that goes back to that issue of they have a bad experience with volunteering. They don't want to go back. It's never what you want to do.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

So I'm going to have as close with a question that I'm opening up to all three of you in no particular order. So, this podcast covers topics that impact civil society. So. Civil society on this show is framed as an ideal. It's the organized systems of collective human experience, including economic exchange, political governance and social relationships that enable people to prosper, reach their potential as productive citizens and flourish as human beings. So, when I read that and I think of who these people are in our context today, it could be. At least three. Volunteer person, him or herself is trying to reach their potential and flourish. Volunteer manager, administrator. As a professional who is trying to flourish and reach their potential. And what about the client or consumer that that volunteer may be serving directly who is signed up for that nonprofit because they need help so they can prosper, reach their potential and flourish? So what do the three of you have to say about this role that volunteerism has in this ideal of civil society?

### ***Dr. Lucas Meijs***

Pivotal. Thank you. Sal, it's really extremely important. Well, I think you ought to make it. The next step is also to see it as a kind of this is not in the kind of transfer from haves to have nots seen this really like a mutual solidarity of people understanding that what happens to you is a social injustice. Could happen to me tomorrow, too, because too many of the little thing is framed as a kind of, Oh, well, I'll help you out tomorrow. Instead of deeply understanding that we're all in the same world so that what this what I see is a big challenge to move away from this paradigm, which is not a civil society paradigm. It's a nonprofit service delivery kind of paradigm to a much more civil society paradigm. We were all in the same, same world, right, if we share benefits that we share problems. And this is yeah. Different wording.

### ***Faiza Venzant***

I want to add November 5th every year is International Volunteer Managers Day, and this year the theme is helping others help. And you asked that question, Salvatore, like what could leadership be doing or what does good leadership look like? And to me, there's two things. And this is not just leaders. This is just anyone who is in a helping profession. I think number one is so important to have proximity to the community that you serve. You don't have that experience with the community that you serve then. Knowing individuals, having regular, consistent, you know, contact with the community that you serve all the time is so important and really understanding what it's like to live and breathe and go about your day. And and I don't mean just from like what you're missing, but to look at a community as brimming with assets and not just what their deficits are. Right. And so when I'll give you an example. I have a child who was born premature, and so I was part of this (?) community, this neonatal community, which is when you have a child born that early, it's a lot of doom and gloom and a lot of

sadness. ,But when you are with parents who you see come through the other side and you see them brimming with joy and you see that side of it, you are in liberation becomes tied with theirs. Right. And are you're wanting to move the needle and wanting to make this experience better for the next person is tied up with theirs. And so if all of us, whether we're volunteer paid SAP, however it is that we help community have that proximity to each other. Like Lucas said, we exist together and we get invested in each other's happiness and in each other's positive outcome. And then the second thing that I would say, you know, that is so important for all of us is that. You know, you if you want to be a practitioner in this work, you have to also always be a volunteer. And I don't mean volunteering only on boards and those positions of privilege, but like frontline volunteering. If you really want to understand what the experience is like for the community, all of us as practitioners and as leaders of volunteers and those invested in volunteerism need to always be practicing and volunteering, whether it's through your child's school or through a cause that's important to you. And you've got to be. It's like a salesperson or someone who reads clothing needs to be on the sales force are always trying to get the pulse and to understand what's happening. I think those two things are so important and I think those are the things that that bring out the humanity in us and help us to recognize, you know, within each other, you know, why why should I care about you and why should I have a love and empathy in my heart for you? Those are the ways in which we can cultivate that.

### ***Megan Cadle***

I think I just hear you say there is community. The community is so important in building that community. Where you're all you're all there for the same reason you're there for that to make a difference in remembering that it is easy to get wrapped up in the politics of, you know, organizations or different things like that. But the fact of why you're there, why the volunteers are there, why are you as a volunteer manager there who you're serving the clients? I think that's what is so great about this profession is it really does create a community among everyone that's involved, whether it be the staff or the volunteers themselves. That that's what I love about working in this profession is that close knit community and that that's what has kept me here. You know, despite the burnout that we talked about earlier, that that is really what to me what nonprofit organizations are all about is that community that they create. And that's what I love about it.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

Dr. Lucas Meijs, Professor of Strategic Philanthropy and Volunteering, the Rotterdam School of Management in the Netherlands. Faiza Venzant, , Executive Director of the Council for Certification and Volunteer Administration. And Megan Cadle, Director of Volunteer and Alumni Engagement, the American College of Financial Services. I thank you all for our wonderful discussion today.

### **Closing music**

### ***WGVU's Jennifer Moss***

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**Closing music fades.**