

Interviewee: Andrea Sullivan
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Abstract: Andrea Sullivan was born in Framingham, Massachusetts, and grew up in Hopedale. From a young age, she helped in her family's pizzeria, Arnold Pizza in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. She attended WPI [Worcester Polytechnic Institute] where she met her husband, Andy. She later worked for Genzyme [Genzyme Transgenics Corporation]. While working for Genzyme, she pursued graduate studies at Worcester State University. She subsequently left the corporate world so she could spend more time raising her children and caring for her family. During this period, she became involved with the Jewish Community Center in Worcester, first for after-school activities for her son, and then in a volunteer capacity. Eventually she became the Special Programs Director. Andrea discusses the importance of family in her life and stresses the need for women to trust their instincts in decision-making, noting that the pursuit of satisfaction in life is an admirable goal. During this interview, Andrea talks about her family history, including the fact that both of her parents emigrated from Portugal. She stresses the importance of encouraging her children in their pursuits and being driven to be the best person she can be. Andrea lives in Worcester with her family and talks about her involvement and passion for the city.

KT: Okay, so for the record, you could give us your full name, including your maiden and married name.

AS: Yes. My name is Andrea Feijo Sullivan. My middle name, Feijo, was my maiden name.

KT: Okay. And when you— you put down when you were born, were you born in Framingham?

AS: I was, yeah. So, I grew up in Milford, Upton, Hopedale, but born in Framingham, so grew up in Massachusetts, quite a bit of Central Massachusetts. But yeah.

KT: And you mentioned you are married?

AS: Yeah.

KT: When were you married?

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AS: Got married in 2004. My husband, Andy, we actually met at college at WPI. So, we both were there for Biotechnology, and graduated together in 2000. Yeah, I'll... I'll let you know. laughs] I don't—I know this is going to get edited. So, I'll just—I'm assuming so. I don't know how much, like, you want me to just talk versus you?

KT: Just go ahead with whatever you feel comfortable with.

AS: Okay. Okay.

KT: So, you mentioned Biotechnology?

AS: Yes. Yes. So, I always loved math, science. And biotech was just— great interest there. And so, after I graduated, I went to work for Genzyme in Framingham, where I did cancer research for seven years, yeah, for seven years and really loved it. But you know, then having a family kind of starting our family changed things and needed flexibility. And I think one thing that, even though it wasn't that long ago, something that I definitely see now, for women and parents in the workplace, that's different, is companies are more apt to be more flexible with parents' schedules, and, like, flex time and such. So even though 2007 wasn't that long ago, there was, at least where I was employed, zero flexibility. You know, I went to ask if I could go down to four days a week, and it was just a flat no. So, I ended up leaving science to, you know, focus more on family and just do things, how we wanted to do them. Everybody's different, how they raise their families, and it was just the right fit for us, for one of us to be home. And then from there, I think always being such a person who liked to be busy and being active in the community, I started volunteering for local nonprofits in the city. And then by the time my kids got to school, I got very active with their schools. That kind of started my career where I'm in now, of fundraising and development. So, kind of started in a very different kind of roadmap for my career, but it was the right map for me.

KT: So, you mentioned your son.

AS: Yeah.

KT: Do you have more than one?

AS: Yes. So, my son is 15. And I have a daughter who is 12. So, they're in seventh grade and tenth grade, they're fantastic. They're a ton of fun. And really, while I focus on career and community, family, for me, has always been my primary focus. I feel very fortunate that the way

my career has gone, it's allowed me to be family focused. And so that's been important. Yeah.

KT: You mentioned a story before [???] about how your son got you into the JCC [Jewish Community Center].

AS: Yes, yeah. So, I can just hear this buzzing, so I just want to shut it off.

AO: No problem.

AS: I can feel it. Soon, assuming no one needs to reach me right now. Yes. So, when my son was entering kindergarten, I needed after school care for a few days a week. Many people in the neighborhood knew of the Greendale YMCA, so I called over to them to line him up for after school care and they're like, "Oh, no, we don't, we don't offer it for that school, for pickup at that school, but the Worcester JCC does." And I find it comical that I didn't... had not heard of the Worcester JCC at that time. So, we went over there and signed him up and joined as members. Very quickly it became an integral part of our life where it was our, it is still our community center, where the kids grew up going there for after school. My daughter went to preschool there. You know, we are constantly in the indoor pool and outdoor pool. My kids are big into aquatics. My husband and my son use the fitness center all the time to exercise. I served on the Board of Directors. I taught fitness classes for children, and then eventually moved into the position that I am in now, as the Director of Development, leading the fundraising efforts at the community center. So, it was a very roundabout way of getting to where I am now, but it was, fate.

AO: Yeah. That's so cute.

KT: Um, a little bit about your family history.

AS: Yeah.

KT: Either the culture, ethnicities, anything about your family history you'd like to tell us?

AS: I am the one of three children to my parents, Matilde and Ed Feijo. They are both immigrants to the United States from Portugal. They both came here as children, seven and 12, and met each other. It's actually really cute, because they actually met each other, they both moved to the same street in the town of Milford.

AO: Awe!

AS: So, I believe my mom might have babysat my father's nephews or something like that.

AO: Oh my God!

AS: So, it's very cute, but being first generation American... Definitely our Portuguese culture is a huge part of our upbringing, and, you know, traditions for holidays, and just what we do as family in general, food definitely. And it's been fun to carry those traditions over to my kids, because even though my husband is a big mix of European descent, they are very... They're half Portuguese. And, so, we definitely try to celebrate a lot of the traditions that I grew up with. So. But yeah, I try to think. I have an older brother, Ed. Eddie, I call him. I think I'm the only one who still calls him Eddie. He's all grown up and professional. So he goes by Ed, but he's always Eddie to me.

AO: Yes.

AS: So, he's, he's in Cambridge, actually he's in Boston now, successful real estate agent, and just really great big brother– or big cousin– a big uncle. Sorry, really wonderful big uncle to my kids, and to my sister's kids, as well. And then my sister, Laura, is younger than me. She has three boys, they're just so adorable. And you know, great cousins to, to my kids. But we all live in Massachusetts. So, while we don't live in the time we grew up in, we all stayed relatively close. And my husband is from Connecticut. So, he... we met in college, and I kept him here in Massachusetts. I kept him here. So, well work kept him, and I guess I kept him too.

KT: (???)

AS: Yeah, so much better! No offense, Connecticut. So, when we graduated, and when we settled down before we bought our house and got married. We had thought a lot. We were both working in Framingham. So, we thought about okay, looking for a home out in that area. But the market was maybe not as crazy as it is now. But it was certainly kind of crazy at the time. We thought, all right, well, let's stay in Worcester and buy something that can be an investment property. And so... the two of us enjoy older homes and fixing them up and everything. So that's what we did. We bought an older house in the Newton Square area and we have put a tremendous amount of love into it. It'll actually be... We'll have owned the home this July for 20 years, which is like...

AO: Wow.

AS: Yeah, it's a big wow and we've certainly transformed it. And not only did we transform the house, but we ended up realizing how much we loved Worcester. We loved our neighborhood and our neighbors, and we realized this was the perfect home for us. And we quickly got involved in just local neighborhood groups and activities and just an amazing neighborhood. We really love our neighborhood. And watching the city transform as it has over the past 20 years, it's been unbelievable. So, we're excited about the direction the city is in. We like going out and being in the city. But also, both of us grew up in small towns very, cookie cutter. Nothing wrong with the towns we grew up in, but everyone was the same and we take great pride in raising our children in a diverse city that offers them a better, I think, understanding of what the world is and who makes up the world. So, we've been... We love our city. We love raising our kids here.

KT: I don't know if you have anything more you'd like to say on growing up in Framingham or in Hopedale.

AS: Yeah, Hopedale is a great town and certainly was a great place to grow up and, wonderful education and everything. But I definitely felt when I got to school, when I got to WPI, and all of a sudden, I became so much more aware of the world. Well, it's so much bigger, but just the diversity. Hopedale is not diverse at all, at least it certainly wasn't then, and it was something that excited me. I liked the, the diversity and just getting to know different religions, different cultures, and that all excites me. I like to see what, different people and what they're into. And so, while I really loved Hopedale, Worcester was a much better fit for my personality.

AO: Mhm.

KT: You've talked about your family history being Portuguese.

AS: Yes.

KT: Was there a community that your parents grew up in that you knew about, like friends?

AS: Um, yeah. So, I mean, my parents, I think, a lot of immigrants, when they come to a new country, they definitely tend to... We see this throughout the United States, right, they tend to cluster. So, Milford is a big cluster of folks from Portugal. So, a lot of people that they know, and so we grew up going to different friends of families, birthday parties, and holiday get-

togethers and such. Milford, Hopedale is a small town. Milford is the bigger town next to it, and it does have a Portuguese club, so we would go occasionally to some of the activities there. But it was more like family run activities, and so a lot of more ethnic food and just, just get - togethers and fun. So that was good. I think it was interesting to me. I always felt I didn't know very many other people in the small town of Hopedale that were first generation Americans. So, I felt I... I certainly fit in in many ways and had wonderful friends. But I always felt a little different because my parents, while they spoke English well, they also spoke another language. They weren't born here. And, so, I think that was the other thing that made me feel more at home in Worcester was that there were so many more people like me, or like my parents here. And I just felt right.

KT: Do you want to mention what area of Worcester you live in?

AS: Yea- uh- Yes.

KT: Sorry!

AS: Sorry, so we live in the Newton Square area. And we love it, because there's so much that we can walk to as far as a lot of small businesses. And then also great neighborhoods to raise kids in, communities where neighborhoods that just connect with sidewalks and quieter streets. And, so, my kids being able to go out on their bikes or skateboards, and just, especially now they're at an age where they're able to go out, but even when they were younger, just knowing that we could get to the quiet parts of the neighborhood, and they could ride their bikes in the road, and it was going to be okay. But also, it's just, it's one of those neighborhoods, and I think you see a lot of this in Worcester, where everyone knows each other. And or if they don't, they're just still very friendly and welcoming. So, it's yes, so I love the Newton Square area. I love all of the city.

KT: And you've alluded to the changes in Worcester.

AS: Yeah, yes. I mean, when I came to Worcester in '96 for college, and was a young adult, didn't have a car, so much more limited with where you can go and what you can walk to, but there was a lot of areas throughout the city that had not yet been revitalized. For instance, downtown where the old Galleria, whatever it was called... When I moved--- was in college, that actually was still an open shopping area. And then it quickly deteriorated. And where do I go shopping? Greendale Mall, which is, of course, now gone, too. [laughs] But what I'm getting at is it wasn't... You didn't have a lot of places to walk to for destinations to go out and have fun or shop. There were certainly dining options, but it just didn't feel as energetic, and I feel like now

there's just so much more offerings. And we frequently go down to the Canal District. We love going into the shops down there, Crompton Collective and all of the places down there. We still love it, and the ballpark opening has just been a fun destination, even though I'm not a big sports person, I'm definitely a very big fan of Worcester. And, so, it's fun to have a team to--- with Worcester's name on the jersey to cheer for and just support, and it's great energy down there. And I love walking just downtown in general. A few weeks ago, I went into Sweet Janes, which is a consignment shop on Main Street. And then I walked over to Crust and grabbed something for dinner, and then walked down to Glazy Susan and grabbed a snack for myself. And just like there's, there's places to go. And it's, it's nice. So, I like the size of the city of Worcester. I love going into Boston for the day, but it's a little bit too big and busy for me, where Worcester is this nice blend of... I have the shops in the businesses to participate in to support, but yet I still have like my quieter neighborhood to go home to my family, which is nice.

KT: How do you view women's experience in Worcester, generally or specifically?

AS: I feel like there is a great support of women for women in the city and that's something I thrive off of. I'm a part of--- I'm on the board--- I'm the treasurer for the Worcester Women in Development. So, it's a group of women who are in the same field as I am, development and fundraising. And it's this amazing group of women who, even though we're all fundraisers for different nonprofits in the city, so you might, or in the general area, you would think that we're competing for the same grant money and sponsorship money and everything, but we're not, we're not. We're very supportive of each other. And always like, oh, you know, this worked for us, maybe this would work for you, sharing of information, and just wonderful support and cheerleaders for each other, which I love that, you know, I think women need to support other women. And so, I have found that group to be incredibly supportive. I've also found other groups. I've been a part of just--- going through my kids with school being involved in their parent groups at the school. So, where they went to elementary school, Midland Street School, very, very active P.T.O. [Parent Teacher's Organization] there, they're just so supportive of each other, and also just with parenting in general. I have this appointment tomorrow, and I don't know how I'm going to make it back in time to pick up the kids--- someone else has your back, it's just, it's just this wonderful support system. And it's not just all women, supporting, I mean, there's certainly a bunch of amazing dads and other parts, people within the community that have stepped up and supported. But I have found a great network of women that support me, and I tried to support them. And also, so where I'm at now, at the Worcester JCC, most of my colleagues that I interact with mostly, are women. And again, there, it's just been this amazing relationship of mentoring and support, and just general cheerleading of each other. So, I think there just needs to be more of that in the world.

AO: Definitely. So... you mentioned how you went to WPI. Did you attend any, like graduate college? Did you go anywhere for graduate school?

AS: I didn't, I had actually, I had started taking a few classes at Worcester State, which is now Worcester State University, to work on my master's, but I just never continued to pursue it. It wasn't what I needed at that time. And so now, yeah.

AO: So, did you have any specific challenges in education? Like growing up, college?

AS: Yes, I mean, I think everybody faces different kinds of challenges for sure. And I think in the early years, in the early months, I should say at WPI you're learning when you just enter college, okay, you're not in high school anymore. How do you adapt to being an independent learner? Keeping yourself on your schedule? So, I think as any freshmen, of course, that was a challenge. But I quickly figured that out and just--- the rigor at WPI is--- can be challenging sometimes, but I really enjoyed what I was studying, and I had wonderful professors. And so, I was well supported there. I feel very fortunate throughout my education.

AO: So, upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options for jobs?

AS: Right! Yeah. So, when I graduated from WPI, with my degree in Biotech, very fortunate with the timing. It was before, I think it was in 2001, 2002, when a lot of graduates were having, starting to have a hard time getting placed, because of the economic downturn that was happening. Then after 911 [the September 11 terrorist attacks], so I was very fortunate where the market was strong. When I got out, I think the placement for jobs out of college was extremely, extremely high at the time. And I started at Genzyme and, you know, it was a large company, I had started under one group, and after a few months realized that that wasn't the right fit for me, but it was a great company in the fact that they wanted to retain people there so they... There were openings available that I was able to transition to. So, getting into the group I was involved in for cancer research was, was great. I think about it, another group of really strong, supportive women that had made a difference. And I'm still friends with one of the ladies I worked with there. So just, you know, enjoying, enjoying it. So, I think the challenge for me with work was, when I did start my family, wanting to adapt in the workplace that was not yet adaptable to what I needed, at least that workplace was not so. So, I think that was my biggest challenge, figuring out what to do with myself because while I wanted to be home more in raising my children, in a more hands-on fashion, I was never one to... I like being challenged, I wanted to be in a work environment, so I had to adapt and find other ways to be driven. So, that's what got me to the community work and fundraising.

AO: So, do you consider anyone, support networks or any mentoring you've had, and how they've been important to you?

AS: There have been quite a few people, I'd say, post, post Genzyme that have influenced and supported me. I'd say many of the fellow parents, from my children's elementary school, just helped me realize the path that I was taking was the right fit for me, that I was the right--- it was right for me to go into more community development and fundraising, then, and to not feel like I had to get back to science one day, because I feel like you put so much effort into your degree, right? I mean, it's hard to imagine not doing that forever. But you can still love what you learned. And I still--- and I think those early years taught--- when I left science in my early years as a parent, what it taught me was that my education was not wasted. I learned how to learn, I learned how to be adaptable, and to find joy in whatever I was doing. So, the parents that I befriended in those early years of being a young mom, definitely were wonderful support systems for me. When I started volunteering at the Worcester JCC, the woman who was the director of development in the role at the time, Jody Fredman, definitely gave me more confidence in doing at a professional level. So, I had always been a lay leader, doing it as a volunteer and she was who gave me, and still gives me a tremendous amount of support and guidance. So yeah, so Jodi's been a great help, for sure.

KT: So, you mentioned Genzyme as your first job.

AS: Yeah. After college.

KT: Did you have jobs before that?

AS: So yes, my parents owned a restaurant when I was in high school, so I worked many, many hours, especially in the summertime. And then I think the summer between say--- and then when I was on campus, I had like an on- campus job working in a lab doing, prep work and such for the classwork. And then I waitressed, because that's like a rite of passage for people in college. And the summer between my sophomore and junior year, I had an internship in a company in Marlborough, a chemical company, I can't remember the name right now. But it was my first, non- university experience in a lab and it was what you would call it, a clean room that I had to do quite a bit of the work in. So, you had to get in with the...It's like a little wind tunnel blowing particles off of you and you get a little suit. And so, you go in, and you have to make sure you're prepped to go into that lab for a few hours, because it takes so long to get ready. So that was my first experience in, a professional industry laboratory. And it was, it was fun. It was a great learning environment for me. And then yes, so after that, I continued to work on campus and labs, waitressing, and everything. And then from graduating WPI, I went right

into Genzyme.

KT: And do you consider any in all of your jobs, any of your jobs, anything that was particularly important that you learned or experience that you gained?

AS: Oh, I think with everything, it is always important and experience gain. I mean, I love the work with the science that we did, when I was at Genzyme. It was rewarding and trying to get a drug to market to help, unmet medical needs, it's a great honor to try to do something like that. And so, that was very rewarding. And I really respected the people I worked with, and how brilliant many of them were, are. And so that was a great experience. And then let's see, and then I, like I said, I had a lot of years of volunteering, but with all of those positions, and involvements, I took them very seriously as if they were a paying job, because I feel like when you're passionate about an organization, you do that, right, so but for my volunteer work at the Worcester JCC, that then led me to working there as the Director of Development. You know, it's like home there. It definitely it's, it's--- my whole family enjoys being there. I love all my co-workers, I love the community that we serve and the mission that we're doing. And so, I find a lot of reward in serving the community. And so, as a fundraiser, a lot of what we do --- I'm raising funds to provide scholarships for children to be able to attend our summer camp programs or our after -school or our preschool program. And, you know, I feel that my kids have been very fortunate where my husband and I can afford to send them to all these wonderful things, and there's so many people within our community that cannot. But yet, they should, you know. I believe in equity for all and so to be able to fundraise for the JCC, so that children can have the same experiences as my kids is incredibly rewarding.

KT: And you said how important family is to you. If you wanted to talk more about, your responsibilities, what you consider to be important for you to take care of your children.

AS: I think honestly...So, in the early years of being a parent, it's okay. I need to keep these little beings alive. But as they grow older, honestly, I feel the most important thing that I can do for them is to be the right role model to show them, the type of person that the world needs and to set the example and motivate them to rise to whatever needs that they're within, right. So, if it's a matter of helping other students in a classroom, or just...My son's on a climbing team. And he's, he's very physically fit and capable. And it's, it's like, okay. Well, the kids who are new to it, you show them the way, teach them, be that role model for them and that support system and same thing for my daughter, whether it be in school, or...She's a really great swimmer, to always kind of look out for the, the, the younger of the kids that are just starting out to kind of be that, that role model and just in general, just trying to show them that we're all responsible for making the world better. So that's really the most important piece of what I have to do as a parent, especially

now where they're like, preteen and teen. Critical, critical time, you know, and that I'm very proud of them. I think they're both excellent kids and great people. So, I feel like with everything I've tried to put in, instill in them and my husband as well, and just their natural being of who they are. I feel like they're headed in the right directions. We're doing our job well, I think. So. But definitely, I like to... Family dinner is still really important and it's hard, especially as they're in middle school and high school, sports and activities and friends and everything. And it's like, alright, well if we have to eat at 5:30, or we eat at 7:30, it's fine. Let's still spend that half an hour sitting at the table together, because that's when you tell your stories from the day, or the kids tell their stories. And we, as the parents, share, sometimes good stuff sometimes like, "Oh, man, today was really hard, but this is what happened." And, you know, showing them that it's okay and grownups have hard days, too, I think is good, good for them to see and work out. And, so. But yeah, it's family's, definitely my top priority. Yeah. It's going to be strange when they're out of the house.

AO: You have a long way!

AS: I have a long way, but it's still it's, it's my son, my son. So, two more years, and he'll be off to college. And my daughter's like, "I'm going to his room," right next to her bedroom. And he said, "She's like, I'm going to expand that would be like my hangout room."

AO: Oh, that's what my sister did.

AS: Right? Like, wait a minute, he still comes home. It's not like--- It's not like he's gone!

AO: That's exactly what my mom said, "We should just let her move in," I was like, "Okay, fine!"

AS: Yeah, yeah, right, exactly! When I left for college, my sister took my room.

AO: Yeah! [laughs]

AS: It had the better closet or-- I don't know-- I forget what it was.

AO: Right? [laughs]

AS: I don't know what it was, she did that.

AO: It's like, when you come home, where are you supposed to go?

AS: Yeah, yeah! Exactly, I'm like, "Wait a minute, he'll still need a room."

AO & KT: [laugh]

AS: I know, it's funny. It's very funny. And, you know, it's... The funniest thing is they have a hangout, they have the --- our basement is finished, it was the playroom, and now it's the hangout.

AO: Friends...

AS: Yeah, it's got its own entrance and exit to the yard so they... Yeah, it's got the whole set-up down there and like... What do you mean, hangout, you have a hangout!

AO: Yeah! [laughs]

AS: But... she just needs more!

KT: Yeah.

AS: Yeah, yeah... you know...

AO: It's never enough.

AS: No, no. I know, I thought she was going to take over closet space, but she actually has the best closet in the house, so...

AO & KT: [laugh]

AS: Lucky kid! But yeah... so... yeah.

KT: So, you've mentioned how you made a lot of decisions for this path that you've chosen, so you could have more family time.

AS: Yes.

KT: Do you see the pros and the cons of this path?

AS: Yeah, I --- so... In the beginning, it was definitely more of a challenge, because I was feeling... I was questioning myself and my decision, was it right to leave my career, the kids? They're only young for so long, they *could* be in daycare, you know? And then you still see them, and you're still, of course... And certainly, that path works for many, many families. But, like I said, it just wasn't the right path for us. And I think, as they got older, and I found passions that replaced a bit of what my career was, I realized, "Okay, you know, this time, and seeing how much my kids value me being in their school, for instance. They liked it. They expressed to me that they liked me being able to run the PTO, or go on field trips with them, and just have that flexible time. Or at pick-up if... [laughs] Many times I'd have a whole gaggle of children walking home with us, like, "Sure! They can all come over," and just giving them that kind of, relaxed, I guess, upbringing, was great, because I had that. My mom was— my mom worked, her schedule was a little flexible so that when I was younger and school-aged, I could have friends over right after school, like I didn't have to get rushed off to one thing or another. I had that-that ease, so that was important to give that to them. So, circling back to your question, it took me some time to be comfortable with the transition, but the more established and further into the path I traveled, I realized this was the exact path I was supposed to take. You don't know it while you're getting into it, and I'm certainly still finding my way through, but I feel more settled now, right. I realize that while science will always be a part of my life, it's always going to be important, and the fact that I can help my kids with all their math and all their science problems, [laughs] at home, you know most parents are like, "Oh goodness, I can't help my kids!"

AO & KT: (laugh) Yeah!

AS: Math and science, like, "I can! I can do it!" You know, so, nothing's been wasted at all, and in fact, I just found that I have all these other strengths that I never knew, so I think it's more about realizing I'm more diverse in my abilities than I had thought I was, and that finding additional career paths is, is okay. And I feel like you two, as college kids, if you leave nursing to go end up, doing something different, that's okay. If you leave business to go like, it's okay. And I think that's one of the biggest things to share with young women especially, is that it's okay to change and to not doubt yourself all the time. You know, just trust your gut. So yeah, so it took me a little while to feel good about it, and to feel like it was the right thing and to not feel, I hate to use this word, but like, at first, I was a little ashamed that I left my career like, I judged a bit. And I feel like many parents, many moms, I think, experienced this, either you feel judged,

because you work full time, or you feel judged, because you stay home with your kids or you feel judged because of whatever, to just kind of learn how to ignore that and just be yourself.

AO & KT: Yeah.

KT: Do you have any regrets at all? It's okay, if you don't!

AS: [laughs] Um, no, I mean, no, I can't --- nothing glaring at me. I think, I think if anything, it's regretting that I would doubt myself, and definitely wish I just had that confidence in myself earlier. But I guess that's a normal, growing up pace, right? So, I think, I think many women will confirm this, that... You are in your twenties, you're discovering yourself. In your thirties you're figuring out, life and where you fit in, and your career paths and everything. And I feel like by the time you hit your forties, you're like, "This is who I am, this is what I have to offer, and, and I'm good with this, and the rest of you better just be good with it, too."

AO & KT: [laughs]

AS: You know, so it's definitely something I've noticed, as I've aged is that, [I] just have more confidence in myself. It's easier said than done.

AO: Definitely.

AS: You know, but it's... Trust yourself, and I think that's one of the things I feel like more women need to do is to, like, trust their feelings and their... There's so much self-doubt. You know, girls do that to ourselves.

AO: Yeah, definitely. So, kind of moving away from that. Do you consider yourself active politically?

AS: A bit?

AO: Whole different topic!

AS: That's alright! I am a registered, I'm an Independent. And I always try to step back and look at the big picture, and I definitely have found over the last, say, 10 years that I certainly lean more left than right. But I've always tried to be an open mind to everyone's perspectives and values and realize that. And I think Massachusetts is kind of this interesting state, because we

have had a Republican governor so much, but then, Senate and Congress and such we, who we vote for a president tends to be more Democratic. So, like I said, I've always tried to just have this wide view. But definitely, definitely leaning more left. You know, I feel very strongly about women's rights. You know, I think even more so having a daughter.

AO: Yeah.

AS: You know, I don't want anyone telling her what she can and can't do. So, I think that is something that solidifies where I feel politically and just other human rights that tend to like more. So, I do try to speak up for candidates in the city, in the area when I feel like they need that support, and I have done so. But I'm excited for, you know --- Senate-- Senator, Harriette Chandler is not running again. And so, there's some interesting people coming up in the pipeline, so I can't wait to see who they are. And I want to... There's one person in particular that I won't say yet, but I'm hoping that she's well supported. And she's someone that I really would like to get behind. So, so much more local politics.

AO: Yeah. Right.

AS: You know, I mean, I certainly tell everyone to go vote nationwide politics too. But my passion is definitely seeing Worcester, or Worcester County represented well, for the interests of the people.

AO: So, kind of with your... [gets call] Oh God, not right now mom.

AS: Sorry mom!

AO: All right. There we go. Okay, so, I know that you mentioned you volunteered at your children's schools. Do you do community work? What would you say your main major accomplishments throughout kind of all of that was?

AS: I think one of my biggest passions to supporting the youth of Worcester, whether it be the kids at my daughter's school, my son's school, or within our community center, or other organizations. And so, I think I'm proud of the accomplishment of supporting youth in the city of Worcester. I really feel like kids are everything and they need--- especially seeing the disparities of what's available to a lot of the children in a city like Worcester, giving them equity is important. So, I'd say that I'm very proud of the work that I've been able to do, or I've been able to assist organizations to do to achieve that.

AO: So, what role has religion played in your life?

AS: I would think I am much more spiritual than religious. I was raised Catholic, which is pretty common for people of Portuguese descent. And I value everything I learned in perspectives. And then what's interesting is I work at my part of a community center, the Western JCC, that Western Jewish Community Center. And so, to grow up experiencing cultural and religious entities there and learning more, and having my daughter go to the preschool there and learning, about religion there has been really important. But I feel like, for me, it's the idea of doing good for others. And I think, no matter what religion you are a part of, that is one of those underlying values that's across all. And so that's really what I've taken out of all of it and instilled in my kids is to be a good person and do good for others, in any circumstance that you can.

KT: Again, switching tracks dramatically!

AO: Random questions!

AS: That's alright.

KT: Have health issues impacted you or your family?

AS: I would say, fortunately, nothing seriously tragic. We've been very fortunate. It's---as everyone ages, and as my parents age, of course, concerns with....My father had to have open heart surgery in the fall, and that was very scary, but to have faith, if you will, right, in the medical community that was taking care of him. I knew if he was going to be alright, it was like, "Okay, this is not going to be fun for you, this is going to be really hard, actually. But you got to just push through." My mom has an autoimmune disease that she's lived with my entire life. And so, she's constantly dealt with that. And, I think that's shaped me a bit, to want to care for others by...Because part of growing up was, not that she needed me to take care of her, but I always felt like I had to help take care of her, if that makes sense? So, we've been very fortunate that everyone is doing well. But you know, it's like I said, as you move through life, things happen to your family members. And fortunately, my husband, myself, and my kids are very healthy.

KT: What autoimmune, if you don't mind me asking.

AS: So, you know, she's got Churg-Straus, which has been recently renamed under another category that I can't think of, but basically, it's her lungs. So, she's always had asthma. And then

with this, it's, it's just like a buildup of the wrong stuff in her lungs, right? And so anyway, she's, for the most part, managed it well, but of course, with everything, you have flare ups and stuff like that. So, she's a tough person, physically tough. You think about --- I have seasonal allergies, right? So, like, you get those days when you're just sneezing and coughing, and you feel crummy, and you're like, ah, but at least you know, it's only during the short amount of time. And then I think about the fact that she feels like that every day. And yet she doesn't let it show, it's impressive to me. She just keeps on going. So.

KT: I'm sure during COVID you were extra careful.

AS: Yeah, yes, we were well, that was... I was sharing when we were getting started, that in order to go over... So last Christmas was a zoom Christmas. My sister and I got my parents an iPad so that they could more easily FaceTime...

AO: Yeah!

AS: with the, press of a button type of thing, which was easier for them. And so that was Christmas of 2020. So, for this Christmas was like, "Okay, everyone test first, and then we'll all get together."

AO: Of course.

AS: Fortunately, we were able to see my parents, but unfortunately, my sister and family had to wait. And then the same thing happened with my husband's family where we were supposed to all get together. And then there was exposure on one end, and we had to delay and I think we finally saw each other the first week of February.

AO & KT: Woah!

AS: My husband's family, yeah, it was, it was a little bit of a delay in getting together. But, you know, the point is, is like we just, we got through it, right? We did it, we figured it out okay, what's the best way of doing this to keep everybody healthy and definitely working at a community center... You know, we've been very careful with mitigating circumstances. There are my kids at school, my husband for work. You can't swipe on to the compound with your ID to even enter the gate without them knowing that you're fully vaccinated.

AO & KT: Oh!

AS: You know, so it's like super lockdown over there. And so, so we've, we've been lucky. Yeah.

KT: And throughout your life, what's been your experience with quality, affordable health care?

AS: So, I, growing up with my parents owning their own business, they often had to then buy their own insurance, right. So very much aware of, of how fortunate we are now. You know, my husband and I coming out of college with careers that we have to have, you know, excellent health insurance coverage. And because I grew up with not the best coverage, I can see how great it is. And so, I feel very fortunate. And then also, you just hear stories of people who--- it's *so* expensive, insurance. So yeah, so very fortunate to have quality insurance.

KT: You've mentioned your parents' business.

AS: Yes.

KT: What was it --- a restaurant? Was it called?

AS: It's a pizza shop. It's called Arnold Pizza in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. And I've tried to think how many years they had it, but it was, I think it was like my seventh grade, is when they opened it, and they had it through college when I was in college, and then they sold it. So yes, I mean, those early summers, that first summer it was like a lot of back room, washing dishes, and [laughs] such, like, a little bit of food prep. But then, I remember my father, always, he would put me... He bought a stool, so I would sit at the cash register, and he's like, "Okay, you run the money," because he could just tell his daughter to do this. So that would be Friday night, I was sitting at that register or answering the phones. It's interesting because you think about how much customer service experience you can have in a restaurant, but then yeah, I mean, I learned how to cook, which was...

AO: Which is nice...

AS: which is nice, it's like, I can make pizza, I can make anything you know. My daughter is on the swim team at the Worcester Boys and Girls Club. And as the, as a fundraiser for the team. We, at swim meets, we do food, and this one woman who's been involved there forever does empanadas. And now it's like, so she's aged out, her kids are gone. And she still came back the first meet to teach me how to make empanadas.

AO: That's so cute!

AS: Which is so cute. And, and more so the staff, my daughter's swim coaches, they're amazing young adults, and they've learned how to do it. too. And they've really taken the lead on it. But the first time I was there, using a fryolator, and I'm like, "I've done that, you know, I know what I'm doing here. I'm comfortable using this."

AO: Yeah.

AS: So, it's like those life skills I learned forever ago are coming into play in my volunteer work, Boys and Girls Club.

AO: That's amazing.

AS: Yeah, but yeah, so they, so yeah, so a pizza shop. And that was honestly kind of like this, this window of time, because the rest of my father's career had been construction of sorts. So, whether it was more masonry and carpentry, and then he opened a flooring, so like, you know, tile and carpet and everything store. And actually, when I left Genzyme and was home with the kids, I worked there part time just again, to do stuff. And a whole other batch of life skills and work skills that I got from working in the showroom and client management and learned how to do billing and everything. So, it's... I think every experience that you work through, you gain important values.

AO: So, how would you say you get through tough times? Another moving onto something else.

AS: Yeah, yeah.

AO: And what, what kind of thoughts keep you going?

AS: I think my friendships, well, my husband is an amazing support. But, you know, my, my wonderful female friends are definitely my lifeline, even if it's just my good friend, Mikayla, will just send me a text. "Hey, girl, you good?" It's just those types of things. That seems silly, but we're here, we're there for each other. So, I just had a major event this past weekend. And not only is the build- up to it very stressful and busy and chaotic, but then, the night of, to have these amazing friends of mine from work that volunteer their time to be there to support me and get me through it. So, definitely my strong female friends, have [laughs] been there and whether it's like, "Hey, let's go walk your dogs together." I love my dog.

AO & KT: [laugh]

AS: Yeah, he doesn't talk back. (laughs) So. Yeah, yeah. It's sometimes--- it's like, just, "Let's just, let's just walk, let's go walk the dogs." Or it's sitting around the fire pit and just just talking or whatever it is, you know, just having that support, is, I'm not wanting to go off and be by myself. And power up, I guess it's more like, alright, I want to be with my friends or my husband, I want to talk it out. And then I want to do something that distracts me so that I can just get through it. But I'm definitely a write-everything-out-that-you-have-to-get-done, stressed out whatever the case might be, and just like, check one box off at a time and just push through. So, but yeah, good, good support systems is, I hope you all can have your support system.

AO: Yeah. So how would you define success in your life?

AS: Personal happiness, honestly, I find that whatever work I do, whether it was within science, or fundraising, or whatever career I have been in, it's been to, it's important that I find gratification out of it. I don't think I could ever just do some random job just to get a paycheck. I need to find gratification in what I'm doing and define that it's important so, so that's how I measure success is, is that I'm doing something for the right reason. And it gives me a feeling of accomplishment. And then I'm making a difference. So, I definitely, that's important. So...

AO: Yeah. So based on your life experience, what advice would you give to a woman of today and future generations?

KT: You've given us a lot!

AO: Yeah! [laughs]

AS: Oh, thank you!

AO: I know, you really have!

AS: Oh good, I mean, honestly, my biggest thing is, there's a few things: one, trust yourself, you know, the other is to be there for each other, is huge. And I think like, my husband, actually has a lot of female friends at work. And so, his perspective is a little different from the average male co-worker, right. And I think having a wife that's very vocal about, "Hey, this isn't fair, this is wrong." And so, to build those networks. He has spoken up for his co-workers who have been, whether it be pay, non- equal pay, or promotions, that really like, "Why are these women not getting promoted when you're promoting this guy?" that kind of thing. So, to align yourself with

people who will support you and speak up, but also, just like I said, trust yourself, and do what gives you joy. You know, like, it's, it's important that, to find success, it's not while you need the paycheck, so that you can survive, it's not about the paycheck.

AO: Yeah.

AS: You know? It's about feeling a sense of accomplishment, because all the money in the world, if you're miserable with what you're doing for life is great. Okay, yeah. So, you can go for vacation and afford all these wonderful things, but you can't buy happiness. Find your path that makes you happy, and do not be afraid to change your path, like a fork in the road type of thing. So yeah, that would be big for me.

KT: So, we're working to tell a fuller story of the history of women...

AS: Yes, yes.

KT: that's been recorded in the past. What should we be sure to include?

AS: Um...

KT: It's a very vague...!

AS: I know, I'm like "Um..?" [laughs] I think, you know, oftentimes, history is written about, you know, what people did as far as jobs, or, you know, leadership positions of like, a more formalized role. But I think what's important is that women are leaders in a community in a, in a different, more informal way, many times, right? Whether it be in the support and networking, roles within a workplace, you always find a person at work, or maybe in school right now, who is that person that you feel you can go to, and maybe give you that guidance, or that's that a little bit of help with something in that leadership role that that person is doing is not documented, not really written down or celebrated. And I think you find that in society in general, is, that you have a lot of women that really influence the way things are getting done, or the way whether a business is run or a community is run a lot of volunteers, and just great community actions that are happening, that are not formalized. And so, they don't get recognized in a way that's the same. But yet, they're so important. I'm also, a big supporter of the environment, and specifically preserving green space in the city of Worcester. And so, it's, it's something that might seem not as important, but there's a lot of people and a lot of women in the city that are fighting for those causes. And so, I think, so to circle back to your question, it's, it's not ignoring the people who

are doing all this informal community work. It's just as important to the overall success of say, the city of Worcester, as you know, the city manager, obviously, he has this formal role, but he has many people that not only work under him, but then support the city at large in all these different ways that aren't recognized the same way. So, I guess it's just really kind of seeing all the little steps, all the little roles that are played.

KT: Is there anyone else you would suggest that we would talk to you to add to the Women's Oral History Project?

AS: Definitely. I mean, there's a lot of business owners that live in the city that I'm wondering if you've probably already spoken to Miriam Hyder. So, her father, Ed Hyder, established Hyder's Marketplace. And so, upon his passing, she and her brother took it over. And she's just again like this very positive female in the city.

KT: If you don't mind spelling her name for me?

AS: Yeah, Miriam: M-I-R-I-A-M. And the Hyder: H-Y-D-E-R. But again, that could advocate for the city, you know, just celebrates the city. I'm sure there's many names. I don't know why her name popped up. But I mean, she's fantastic. But there's plenty of people, so yeah. There's a woman actually, Ruth Cane, Ruth Seward Cane. So right now, she's working for the city of Worcester, the public school department, I think. It's like, it's the adult education, it's after- hours type of thing. But again, she's an environmentalist and just involved in the community in general. So, I can email you her contact information, but she's someone that I admire and really like her story... Yeah, I'm sure there's other people, I can email you. [laughs]

AO: Thank you.

AS: Yeah, no problem.

KT: And thank you for taking the time.

AO: I know. Seriously!

AS: My pleasure, my pleasure. Yeah, it's it's always funny when you start, like, thinking about life.

AO: I know!

AS: It goes on weird (laughs) But...

AO: But thank you so much, seriously!

AS: My pleasure, and I hope you ladies...