

Interviewee: Linda St. John

Interviewers: Emily Parravano and Caitlyn Thompson

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Location: Fallon Community Health Plan Offices, 10 Chestnut Str.

Transcribers: Emily Parravano and Caitlyn Thompson



Overseen by Professor Leslie Choquette and Professor Allison Meyer, Assumption College

**Abstract:** Linda St. John was born in 1964, and grew up in Willsboro, New York. She attended Castleton State College in Vermont before transferring to Utica College of Syracuse University where she graduated in 1986 with a Bachelor's Degree in public relations journalism. She moved to Worcester about two years after graduation, where she worked in human resources for Fallon Clinic. In this interview, she focuses on her career as a human resources worker and the path her work life has taken. Linda discusses how she moved around this field until she found her "fit" with Fallon Community Health Plan. She currently serves as Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, overseeing a staff of her own, and serving on the board with other executives, the company president, and CEO.

**CT:** My name is Caitlyn Thompson and I am here with Emily Parravano in Worcester on November 13, 2103. We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 Nation Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, politics, and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with work. Thank you for your help with this important project.

**EP:** Okay...Mrs. John, is it okay if we record your oral history today on November 13?

**LJ:** Yes, and you can call me Linda.

**EP:** Okay.

**CT:** What is your full name, and maiden name if applicable?

**LJ:** Linda Gale St. John.

**CT:** When were you born?

**LJ:** 1964.

**CT:** Do you have any children?

**LJ:** No.

**CT:** Are you married?

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**LJ:** No.

**CT:** No? What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

**LJ:** So my background is French and German, but I mean, I grew up in the United States so no particular cultures I guess.

**EP:** Tell us about your parents.

**LJ:** My parents, okay, let's see. So my father grew up in a really small town in upstate New York, up in the Adirondacks called Willsboro, New York, and my mom grew up in Jamaica which was a section of, I've got to think of it...Queens [NY] I think. Can we halt it one second and let me see? [Goes to computer]

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** [Returns to chair] Okay and my mother's parents retired in upstate New York so my mom came up, I think when she was around twenty, and that's how she met my father. And they've been married over fifty years, and they still live in upstate New York in a small town called Peru, which is near Plattsburg in the Adirondacks near Lake Placid and that area just for people to, to know that. So, I grew up in upstate New York in that small town called Willsboro on Lake Champlain.

**EP:** So, the only two places you've lived are there and Worcester?

**LJ:** Yes, although I guess I lived for one year in Pittsburg, and when I got out of college, I went to college, and because I lived in a small town, and I got out of college in 1986, you know I was looking for a job. And, I was a public relations journalism major and I didn't know what I was going to do or how I was going to get a job. And, where I grew up, the Adirondacks, is beautiful country, but it's not widely known for great jobs. So, I met a friend in college and she was from Pittsburg, and we had this dream as young people do of kind of going off and getting our own apartment together and living in the city. So, she was from very close to Pittsburg, so we decided right after college we would go and live together, rent an apartment, and get jobs in Pittsburg, which we did. I was only there for a year, but yes though, so I've lived in three places.

**CT:** What was your job in Pittsburg?

**LJ:** Oh, so interesting of you to ask. So, I got out of college and I had this public relations journalism degree, and I had no money, and I applied for jobs all over the city. And finally, I got this job that actually was what I'd call the backend of public relations in journalism. And, it was at, on this place called Liberty Avenue in Pittsburg, which was really, rugged heart of the city there...

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** ...And my friend and I had this apartment together, so I took the bus every day or took the, they had a tram in Pittsburg, and so you know I took the, what was called public transportation. And you know my mother, who basically, you know, lived in the country was like, 'Oh, you don't need a car. You can take public transportation.' And I was basically this country kid who had grown up in the country and, you know, I had to like take the bus every day, which I didn't enjoy doing, and then going into downtown Pittsburg to work. So, the job, our big client was Proctor & Gamble, which sounds exciting right?

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** But, my job was basically watching the Proctor & Gamble products on all of these television shows, timing how long the product was on the air, then going to an advertising book, figuring out how much money Proctor & Gamble saved from a public relations perspective, by having their product on the air. It was totally boring. I had no interest in it. I kind of hated it...

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** And I made like, I made no money. So, it was tough, it was really tough. I was disappointed. I thought, 'My God I have this degree, and this is going to be my life,' and I was away from my family. And, Pittsburg was really, really hard for a lot of reasons. And then, something wonderful happened. I got laid off from my job. And, the reason why I say that's wonderful is because it gave me really good experience with what it's like to lose your job...

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** ...and to understand that you have to collect unemployment, you have to figure things out, and it led me to move here. My sister happened to be living in Worcester, on the West Side, Tatnuck?

**EP:** Oh yeah.

**LJ:** Over, right near where you go to school.

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** So, it led me here, and it really led me to human resources. So, one of the most difficult points in my life turned out to be something really positive because it led to where I am today.

**EP:** Blessing in disguise.

**LJ:** Yup, absolutely.

**CT:** That's awesome.

**LJ:** So, that's my first job.

**CT:** [laughs]

**EP:** So how many years after you moved to Pittsburg did you move here?

**LJ:** So I was only in Pittsburg for a year.

**EP:** So you moved here right after that?

**LJ:** Yeah, so what happened is when I got laid off, we still had money on our rent, and my parents were paying my rent at the time along with my health insurance and everything. So, I stayed there a little bit longer and I went out and just got some temp jobs...

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** ...and that turned out to be really fun. I got to work at a whole bunch of different companies, The Art Institute of Pittsburg, and I did lots of different things. They weren't high level jobs at all. They were things like a receptionist and such. So my parents were like, 'Oh my God, you have this degree and you're out being a receptionist.' But, you know what? I was enjoying it. And then I had a period of time when I worked at the temp agency as their receptionist. And what I learned was, I saw the people in the back who at that time were called placement coordinators, but they were recruiters basically. And, they would interview all the people coming in, they would talk with all the companies, and then they would match up people for the jobs.

**EP and CT:** Mhmm

**LJ:** They were always having fun, they were helping people, they were working with companies, and I thought, 'That looks really fun.' So, when I moved here, I got a job. My first job here was as a recruiter at Fallon Clinic, and it's because of all that had happened.

**EP and CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** You know, I got laid off, and then I was a temp, and then I worked at the temp agency. I saw these people doing something that I was like, 'That looks really fun.' And that's how I got into human resources.

**CT:** That's awesome.

**EP:** [laughs]

**CT:** Backtracking a little, where did you go to college?

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**LJ:** I went to college at Utica College of Syracuse University. I think they're just called Utica College now.

**EP:** Yeah.

**LJ:** Yeah, but, yeah that's where I went, and I have a degree in public relations in journalism.

**CT:** What was your experience like at college?

**LJ:** The first two years of college, when I was a freshman and a sophomore, I went to school in Vermont at a college called Castleton State College. And, that college was very small. And, I learned as a sophomore that I, I just didn't think I could be there another two years and really kind of grow. So, I needed the next step. But when I went to college, I wasn't ready for a huge college either. You know, I kind of wanted a small place. So, I left Castleton and then I went to Utica, which was the perfect size, and I had a good experience. I was a public relations journalism major. We had really good professors. It was a great school. I met, you know, I met some good friends, and I learned a lot, and I also had fun. You know, I had a good balance there. I had already been away from home a couple of years, so I was okay with that part of it, and I built some nice relationships. So I, I enjoyed it a lot. And, that's where I met the friend that I lived in Pittsburg with for the year.

**EP:** Nice.

**CT:** So, you work here now. What's your official title?

**LJ:** My official title is Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.

**CT:** So, take us through the day and the life of Linda...

**EP:** [laughs]

**CT:** ...at Fallon Community Health Plan.

**LJ:** Now? Today? What it's like? It, it is total variety. You never know. You certainly have, you have a lot of variety. So, my job is made up of, I think of it as several pieces of a pie. Okay? So, fundamentally, I'm responsible for running human resources. Okay? So, that's all about compensation, benefits, employment, recruiting, employee relations, organizational learning and development, etcetera. And, I have people on my staff now who run those departments, but I'm responsible for all of that. So, that's one chunk of the pie. Another chunk of the pie is I'm a member of the Senior Leadership Team, and I report to the president and C.E.O. So, I'm also running, helping to run the company with a senior group of people doing the same thing. So, I work with people responsible for sales and marketing, the chief financial officer, the chief operating officer, the chief strategy person, the chief communications person, the president of

government affairs, and, and the president of the company. And, we're all another team working on trying to achieve our strategic plan, and move our company forward. So it's, there's a lot of people, and within those two major pieces of the pie are other smaller groups. So, a typical day can be anything from meetings with the senior team on the business, and our strategic plan, and what are we doing to move that forward. It can be helping my team to meet their goals. It really, it all depends.

**EP:** Wow, so never the same?

**LJ:** Never the same.

**CT:** [laughs]

**LJ:** Always variety.

**EP:** That's good.

**CT:** Do you ever travel for your job?

**LJ:** I don't travel very often for my job, no.

**EP:** Good and bad.

**LJ:** Good and bad.

**EP and CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** Yeah.

**CT:** How did you, like work your way up through the company?

**LJ:** So, I took you through Pittsburg, and I took you through the recruiting, and I started at Fallon Clinic as a recruiter. And, it was really fun. I really liked it. And, as a recruiter, I worked in human resources. That was my department. So, I met a lot of managers. You know, the whole company was my customer. And I was responsible for interviewing people and placing people in the right job. And, that's when I really learned the fit is really important. You can be the smartest person in the world, but if you don't have the right fit, if you don't share, excuse me, if you don't share the values of the company, you're not going to be the right fit. So, it's not just a, a game of well I meet you and I have an opening, I'm going to fit you in there. No. You have to learn about the person, the person has to learn about the company, and the job, and the manager, and all that have to be the right fit. So, I did recruiting for a while, and then the company changed, and the company ended up merging with a large hospital system called Saint Vincent Hospital.

**EP:** Oh yeah, downtown.

**LJ:** Right, so I went from working at Fallon Clinic, and at the time Fallon Clinic also supported this company, Fallon Community Health Plan. We were the HR department for organizations, the clinic and the health plan. So, we merged with Saint Vincent Hospital, and that was pretty exciting. That was companies merging. You have try to merge cultures, etcetera. And, my boss at the time did something really neat in the world of mergers. He told all of us that we were going to move over to the Saint Vincent Hospital Human Resources Department. Okay? Because when you do a merger it quickly becomes us them, we they...

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** Okay? And, he got us together as a department right away. And, I think that was really smart. It broke down a lot of barriers. So we went over and worked there, and when we did that my job changed because, guess what? Saint Vincent Hospital had a whole group of recruiters. You know, they were another company, had their own Human Resources Department, and everything over here. So my boss came to me and said, 'What do you think you'd like to do? You've been recruiting for a while.' So, I said I'd like to do employee relations. And the reason that I came up with that was that when you recruit, you're the person's first connection to the company. So, they come into the company and when they have a question, a concern, an issue, they often call you. Okay? And they say, 'Hey you know I remember you hired me, and can I talk to you about X, Y, or Z.' So, you get into employee relations very quickly. So, I said, 'I'd like to do employee relations.' So, he said, 'Great, that sounds great. That will be your new role when we move over to the hospital.' So, when I went over to the hospital, I did employee relations for Saint Vincent Hospital, which was a five-hundred bed hospital of about a thousand employees. Fallon Clinic, which had about six-hundred employees at the time, and the health plan, Fallon Community Health Plan, which had a couple hundred employees at the time, and I was basically the only employee relations person for that volume of people, it was a big job...

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** So that was, however, where I learned employee relations. You, I would come in at like seven A.M. and what you have to understand about a hospital is it's a twenty-four-seven enterprise, so its running twenty-four hours, seven days a week. So I would come in, and automatically, right away, maybe something happened in the laundry, maybe something happened with a nurse, with using the drug machine, who knows. Anything could have happened. So you came in, you had a whole list to work on right away. So, I mean the hospital alone, employee relations was a full-time job. And, you had all levels of people. You know you had people basically who were doing jobs like working in the cafeteria, working in the laundry, all the way up through to nurses and administrators. So, you got to see a vast array of humanity, and people, and you got to understand that. And, at the same time we were all working on this merger, so trying to merge our cultures together, and all of that. That was very exciting. At the time, I was also going to get my MBA at Anna Maria. So, there was a point in time that I completed my MBA and I was thinking I might want to do a little something different. I was also getting a little burnt out of employee relations for like two thousand people.

**CT:** Yeah, that's a lot.

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** It was a lot. So, I saw a job posting here at the health plan that was for provider relations, and they were requiring a master's degree. So, I had just gotten my MBA in health care and I thought, 'Well this might be good. You know, I've worked at the clinic, I know a little bit about the health plan, I worked at the hospital. This would be a great opportunity to get to know the health plan.' So, you know, it's interesting. While I've worked kind of in the same environment, the environment has changed so much that I feel like I've worked for several different companies...

**EP:** Interesting.

**LJ:** ...throughout my career. Even though, it's really, it's been essentially at the same organization, but it's changed, it's evolved a lot. So, I got the job in provider relations, and I left human resources, and I went over and worked in provider relations. So I went over there for about three months, and at the time, the health plan, the clinic, and the hospital started to split. So the clinic started to decide that they wanted to work with more than one, what they call in the insurance world, payer. So, they wanted to work with more than one insurer. The health plan said, 'We'd like to work with more than one provider,' which was the Fallon Clinic. So, at the time, the business changed and they split up, and I was over in provider relations. So, turned out that I didn't love provider relations. It just wasn't the right fit. Remember how I talked about the importance of fit?

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** So that wasn't the right fit for me, and I was a little bit stuck. But, I was only there for three months and this split went up, went on. So, the folks at the clinic called me, and they said, 'Well, how, you know, how are you liking it?' And I said, 'Well you know, it's okay, but I think I've really learned that I'm a human resources person.' And they said, 'That's great because we're splitting, and we want you to come back.'

**EP:** Huh.

**LJ:** So, then I said, 'Okay, that's great.' So we all worked it out. I was only in provider relations for three months, then we talked about what was I going to come back to? You know, because we had to redesign our whole human resources department because we had been merged with Saint. Vincent. So, they said, 'Well, what would you like to do?' So, at that point, I took on learning and organizational development, I was back doing employee relations, I think I might have taken on some of recruitment at the time, all of it's a little bit of a blur I'd have to go back into detail. But, I went back, and I was really happy to be back. I had, I got a new boss at the

time, and it was a woman by the name of Tina Osgood who just became a tremendous mentor to me, and really allowed me just to grow even more.

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** I think that's what's really nice about my career is people have really given me an opportunity to explore, try different things, and I think that I've been aware of here's what I do well at and here's what I don't do well at. And understanding the importance of the fit, is really just critical. So then, and I'm sorry this is so long...

**CT:** Oh no this is good.

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** ...but it's a twenty-five year long career...

**EP:** You've got a lot to fit.

**LJ:** ...It does go on. So, I worked for Tina for many years, and Tina was the chief HR officer, and at that time it was for the Fallon Clinic, and it was for Fallon Health Plan. And then, there came a point, because we had split from the hospital, they were their own, and then there came a point where the hos—the clinic, sorry, the health plan decided they really wanted their own human resources department. So, at the time Tina wanted to go into, wanted to kind of work a little bit less. So, she wanted to go to three days a week. And she worked at, she lived out in East Longmeadow. So she was working out, you know, she had a drive.

**EP and CT:** [laugh] Yeah.

**LJ:** Right? Yeah. So, we decided at that time that we would split our department. We had this department of thirty people, and they supported the clinic and the health plan. So, the health plan said, 'We want our own HR department.' Tina said, 'I'd like to go three days.' So, the health plan said, 'Great, we'd love to have you come over and be in charge of human resources at the health plan three days, and we'll get a new person at the Fallon Clinic to do that.' So, our department went through this two or three week period where none of us knew quite where we were going to go. Some of us were going to come here, some of us were going to stay at the clinic. So, that was a very interesting time, because literally two or three weeks you just didn't know where you were going to go, or what you were going to do. So, it turned out that I came over here with Tina as the director of human resources, and we had a couple people with us. We had a learning and organizational development person, we had a recruiter, and then we bought the rest of the services from the Fallon Clinic until we could fully build our department. So, I had this really neat opportunity to build a human resources department. And, that was a lot of fun, working solely for the Fallon Community Health Plan. So, that went on for about five years, and then Tina did, decided to retire about a year and a half ago, and I was offered the job as the chief HR officer. So, that brings us up through to...

**EP and CT:** Through right now.

**LJ:** ...here we are, here where we are today.

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**EP:** What would you say that your work here has meant to you?

**LJ:** So the work here has meant a lot to me. It's been really important. I, I didn't know if I could do this job. Okay? I was alw –I was what I would call a really good wing person, and I enjoyed working for Tina and being her wing person. And she was kind of the person in the spotlight, and I ran the day to day, and I liked that. And people would always ask me, 'You know, are you going to take her job? Are, you know.' I think a lot of people saw me in this next position, and I don't know that I necessarily saw it myself. Okay? There were parts of her job, like working with the board, that a lot of people didn't see, that I knew about, and was a little worried as to how effective I would be at that. But what it has meant to me is, it's meant to me that I can do it, I've learned that I can do it, and I think I've learned that I can do it very well. I've built a fantastic team of people who I work with where the fit is everything. And we work—learned how to be a team, how to communicate, how to work through conflict, how do we make decisions, and how do we drive a performance driven culture. So it's, it's been a lot of fun. And it's meant a lot to me and I've also proven to myself that I can be I think a good colleague to the rest of the senior team, that I can contribute to the business, and I've learned that I can work pretty successfully with the president and CEO of a billion dollar company and support that organization. So, it's been a transformational year for me, and I've learned a lot and overall, I mean, there's been a couple bad days...

**EP and CT:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** ...but overall it's been a wonderful, tremendous, really great experience.

**EP:** That's big.

**CT:** Were you intimidated at all, working with the board within the first few months?

**LJ:** Yes! So, yes and absolutely! So, the board to me was one of the most intimidating parts and one of the reasons that I hesitated from being interested in the job. I had a meeting with the chair of the job before I, before I took the job and you know, he's a really nice guy, smart guy, and a fair guy. So that's really helped, I have a good relationship with him and I've, I oversee – well I'm a direct connection to the executive evaluation and compensation committee of the board, and I've gotten to know those members and you know, have been able to work effectively with them. But absolutely, yes. That was intimidating, and the only way you're going to get through it is you've got to learn what you're talking about and then you know you've got to go out and do it.

**EP:** Jump in!

**LJ:** And you know what, yeah, jump in. You've got to remember, so the president and CEO chose me to do the job. And then he wouldn't have chosen me if he didn't think I could do it.

**EP:** Right, there was a reason.

**LJ:** So, so you have that behind you too!

**CT and EP:** Yeah...

**LJ:** You think, like, well he thinks I can do it so, you know? I got to just try to and do it. Yeah!

**EP:** Go for it.

**CT:** Is the board primarily made up of men? Or is it, like, a split between men and women?

**LJ:** Yes, good question. And we have a mix of women on our board. We have a pretty decent mix of women and you know they're quite accomplished in their careers as well so I think that's been helpful and the age of the board varies as well...

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** ...so its not just men.

**CT:** Do you find that's true throughout the whole company that it's a mix or...?

**LJ:** Fallon Community Health Plan is made up of much more women...

**EP:** Hmmm..

**LJ:** ...than it is men. And so I'm just thinking of our senior team, I think it's a little less than half are women. So, that's nice...

**CT:** Yeah.

**EP:** Mhmm.

**LJ:** ...cause you know, you've got other women leaders that you're working with...

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** ...as well. Yeah, our president and CEO is very supportive of women he's brought in several women to the board, he obviously, you know he hired me as a woman, he hired other people on our team as women so I mean think that speaks a lot to him.

**CT:** Yeah.

**EP:** Definitely.

**EP:** Let's see...how would you say you've balanced different priorities, interests, responsibilities throughout your life...or now?

**LJ:** So, when I was at the hospital doing that employee relations job, I didn't do so good a job of that. And I worked really hard and a lot of hours and I, you know, if I had to go back again I don't think I'd do that. But I think I learned a lesson there and what I've learned is that balance is incredibly important. So, there are things that I do to make sure that I'm rested, I take care of myself, I exercise, I eat well, you know I have a really good social network, I, you know, I enjoy doing things with my friends and I also enjoy doing things alone.

**EP:** Mhmm...

**LJ:** So I'm a little bit introverted, which I think a lot of people don't necessarily believe if they know me, but..

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:**...but I get energized by being alone, doing things by myself, so I've learned that about myself and I make it a point to have some time to myself to do that and I've been probably much, much better balanced in the last few years. It's really important...

**EP:** Yeah.

**LJ:** ...because if you're just exhausted all the time and you burn yourself out and you're trying to be everything to everyone, you're not going to be necessarily, you know, do well.

**EP and CT:** Yeah...

**LJ:** You have to pick a few things that you want to do well in.

**CT:** How many hours were you working at the hospital per day?

**LJ:** Oh those were probably, like, easily ten-hour days...

**EP:** [whistles]

**LJ:** ...Ten/twelve hour days.

**EP:** Do you work 40 hours a week here?

**LJ:** So I work probably, you know, it averages 40/45, sometimes it's 50, you know, but it's much better mixed, it's much more balanced. A lot of that has to do with, I have a team of people who are just outstanding if I didn't have them I wouldn't be able to do this job. There's no way. So who you build around you is critically important, you cannot do it alone. It's all about that fit again.

**EP and CT:** Yeah...

**LJ:** So not only is it, it's really important for me to have the right fit in my job but it was critical for me to work with people who were going to support me in the organization where that fit was important to them as well.

**CT:** So what kind of qualities do you kind of cherish in your team?

**LJ:** So things that I cherish are integrity, trust, humor, ability to work through conflict. Those are some of the biggies. I mean, we've got to trust each other...

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** ...and trust is a process, it's something that's built. Good communication is really important and I think you've just got to, you've got to have integrity, you know, you've got to, if you say you're going to do something, you know, you need to do it so... that's a good question.

**EP:** Maybe... switching gears a little bit, do you consider yourself politically active?

**LJ:** I'm not really politically active...

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** Yeah that's, that's – I'm' not, I have to admit.

**EP:** What about religion?

**LJ:** I'm not really active in my religion at all.

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**EP:** That's okay!

**CT:** Yeah!

**EP:** Do you do any volunteer work? I mean...

**LJ:** So I serve on a board called Bottom Line. And Bottom Line is an organization – and you guys I think will be interested in this because it's about helping kids in Worcester get into college and stay in college and its [www.bottomline.org](http://www.bottomline.org) and their motto is, is get in, graduate and go far in life and what they do is help kids that are basically first generation and low income. They help them with the paperwork and all of the financial aid forms and they help steer them to colleges they can afford and colleges that are going to support them. And then they have an advocate who's with them who checks in on them and if they have an issue with financial aid or the bursar's office or, you know, anything they go see them on campus, they visit them, and they help them work through issues so that, you know, if someone gets sick in their family, sometimes in some cultures the first reaction is like well I'm gonna go drop out and take care of my mother, right? And I think they help them to work through those issues so they can stay in college and graduate. I know I had the opportunity, you know, my parents were supportive of me, certainly financially, I had that. My parents didn't go to college but it was really important to them that I went through college, so they were wonderful in the fact that they had a value for it and they paid for it. Not everybody has that...

**EP:** Mmm.

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** You know, its different now, as well, right? So, if your parents aren't committed to that then you need someone to kind of help you along the way and this organization, Bottom Line, does that. So, I think that it's really important because this is Worcester's next work force generation. So I've enjoyed seeing the young kids and working with them and, you know, how smart they are and some of the obstacles that they've overcome, so that organization has been in Worcester about five years and they do good work. So, yeah, I'm pretty active in that organization.

**EP:** How did you hear about that?

**LJ:** So, this is kind of interesting because about five years ago I started looking to be involved in some kind of a board. And I wasn't sure what it was but I felt like it was time, I can give back something to my community, you know, I've done well, I've learned a lot, people have given me opportunities, well maybe I can help an organization. So I put some feelers out and you know, Bottom Line came to me! And said we're just here, you know, we're in Boston but we want to branch out in Worcester and that's how it happened. So, it was again, the fit was right, it was a great organization. They have metrics to measure their success, they have a lot of integrity in what they do, they're excellent communicators, they help people and the fit was right so I got involved with them and I've been pretty involved with that organization.

**EP:** Where is it located?

**LJ:** So, they are located at 40 Southbridge Street in Worcester, they're right over next to Hanover Theater. And they're a good organization and they work with local colleges you know, they help kids get into the right one and graduate and get jobs.

**EP:** I'm just curious, off the record, do they usually stay in this area, the kids?

**LJ:** You know, that's a good question. The first graduating class just graduated so we'll see...

**EP:** Ohh...

**LJ:** ...we'll see. But one of the kids we did with them—because I think if you go to college around here you're not necessarily sure what the businesses are like, like, you're at Assumption right?

**EP:** Mmhmm.

**CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** Have you ever been in this building before?

**CT:** Nope!

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** Probably not, right? And then so what we did with Bottom Line is we had them come around to a number of employers in the area, we had, like, a little career thing where they all came around and they went to a bunch of different colleges and I think they went to, you know, a pub crawl or something at the end...

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** But they came in, we brought them in our conference room, we told them about FCHP and other organizations did the same thing and then we said, 'You know because you've got to get a [degree]...' – I'm visual and I needed to understand, when I get out of college what am I going to do?

**EP and CT:** Yeah...

**LJ:** ...what's it like? You know? So, we said here's our café downstairs, we have a gym next door, you know, this is the world of insurance, this is what health insurance – this is what we do, and I think it just helped them to see it. Like, I had a couple internships in college and that's how I learned what I didn't want to do.

**EP and CT:** Yeah.

**LJ:** You know, sometimes internships—Oh! I found it, that's what I want to do, but often times too internships are like this is—this is where I'm like, No this is not what I want to do.' So I think it's helpful to show kids, you know, this is what it's like.

**EP:** Absolutely.

**LJ:** Because I didn't know, until I, you know, had some internships and that type of thing.

**CT:** What kind of reactions did you get from the kids, like, showing them around? Were they just kind of like, taking it all in or...?

**LJ:** Yeah, and they were like, you know, gee, I'm busy at college and I didn't know that this building existed, I didn't know what it was like inside, I didn't understand really the world of health insurance and some of them were all, you know they had prepared, like Bottom Line does that, they were all dressed up. A couple kids got jobs, they ended up getting jobs because they were students, and say in our marketing department we needed people to call, you know, people between 5 and 8 let's say so a couple of the kids came in and ended up getting jobs.

**EP:** Wow...

**LJ:** So it's just, you know, you get some exposure to what you're doing and you go from there and without it, you know, you're in your college, you're in your dorm, and you know that becomes your world but very quickly it flies by and you then got to go on to the next step.

**CT:** Yeah.

**EP:** Do you—what are your hobbies outside of work?

**LJ:** I like to read, I like to spend time with friends, I love to go to spas.

**CT and EP:** [laugh]

**EP:** Who doesn't?

**LJ:** Yeah, so that's one of my favorites, and I exercise and you know, spend time with my family. So, I'm very close to my sister who lives about an hour away.

**EP:** Does she have children?

**LJ:** No!

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**LJ:** Neither of us are, neither of us are married, neither of us have children, she has a boyfriend that she lives with.

**EP:** Is she older or younger than you?

**LJ:** She's older, three years older. But we're really close.

**EP:** That's good. Do you guys go to the spa together?

**LJ:** Sometimes we do, yes, we started a sister spa thing that...

**EP:** I should do that with my sister!

**LJ:** ...yeah, that we go to. We try to go to Canyon Ranch once a year for our birthdays.

**CT:** That's fun...

**LJ:** Yeah!

**EP:** Hmm...how would you define the success in your life and how has that definition changed over time?

**LJ:** So that's a good question. [pauses] I think one of the ways that I found success in my life is really first of all getting to know myself, taking some real time to spend with me and getting to know what was important to me. One of the other things that I did growing up in the human resource world is, you know, I knew a lot about the practicalities of the job, but a couple years ago (before I took this current job that I'm in), I wanted to go back to school one more time and I wanted to learn more about the theory and I wanted to learn about organizational design and development. So I went into a blended program at Mass School of Professional Psychology that was a ten-month program. It was very, very intense, and it was a cohort so we all went through it together and a lot of it was learning about, you know, master's level organizational psychology type stuff and the impact of psychology on an organization – people, how anxiety affects people and organizations. And we're in a pretty anxious time right now with the economy etcetera and I realized if I'm really going to help people and help the organization that I needed to go get some of that theory. So I did that. During that program, we spent a lot of time learning about ourselves, doing assessments, giving each other feedback and receiving feedback, learning how to do that, and it's not easy hearing feedback about yourself, how you might've done better at something and you have then to go and absorb that and see how much of that could be true and then often times change your behavior. And it's really hard, but it was a great experience doing that. So, from there, once I got that degree, then when I moved into this job, a culmination of everything that I had done over my life, I think. I believed in working hard, I believed in surrounding myself with good people, the whole "fit" thing. I've had tremendous bosses. I'm so lucky! I've had bosses that were mentors to me, that I trusted who gave me developmental opportunities and I know not everybody has that because I talk with colleagues, I go to meetings, and you know, a

lot – they’re complaining about their bosses I mean, I’m really lucky with that. But I’ve also kind of stuck to what’s important to me, that fit thing is incredibly important, the values that I talked about, incredibly important, and I’ve kind of hung onto those. So, aside from work the other thing that I did that I think has contributed to my success, and this comes from my parents, really has to do with financial responsibility. So, I watched my parents work really hard in order for me to go through college, and to have them pay for it, so that I was a little bit of a step ahead. When I graduated college I had a small loan that I had to pay back, so that I could learn the responsibility of that...

**CT:** Right...

**LJ:** And, you know, I have friends that I went to college with however many years ago who are still paying a college loan....

**EP:** Woah...

**LJ:** ... And it’s tough. That’s really tough, and a couple of important things. My sister and I lived together here in Worcester on the west side for about five years and that afforded us the ability to save money, split rent, and we both saved up for our own townhouses.

**EP and CT:** Mhmm....

**LJ:** So we were able to do that and I think the financial responsibility has been so important because I’m here 25 years into my career and, you know, I’m doing certainly well financially and I’m very solid with my home and ability to take vacations and etcetera and that didn’t just happen. A lot of had to do with my parents and the foundation of being financially independent, them helping me with college which was critical and important, my sister and I sort of living together and, you know, sharing rent and saving money and then us both able to be independent and always saving money, being responsible about my 401K, saving for retirement. All of that. So, I think all of those, you know, from how I grew up, my parents values all come together with the career success and the financial success.

**CT:** Do you have any regrets about life choices that you’ve made?

**LJ:** [pauses] No. I don’t think I have any regrets. One of the things that I struggle a little bit with – I’m a single person, not gay....

**CT:** Mhmm...

**LJ:** ...but not that that’s bad, but just, I’m a heterosexual single woman and I don’t have a lot of time to do the dating thing.

**CT:** Mhmm...

**LJ:** Okay? So, have I lost out a little bit on that? I did have a ten-year long significant relationship with a man, that ended a few years ago. So, I've enjoyed at this time being on my own and I've devoted a lot to – this is a pretty big job, I've devoted a lot to that. However, sometimes I do wonder... huh? You know, am I, am I missing out a little bit on that part of my life? So what I've done with that is I've just said if that's meant to be that'll come along. But I'm very, very happy overall. You know, occasionally you wouldn't mind a date to a certain event...

**CT and EP:** Yeah [laughs]....

**LJ:** ...or that type of thing but I mean, I'm not lonely, I'm really happy. So that's about the only thing. Other than that I'm really kind of at the pinnacle, I mean I'm doing really well.

**EP:** Good! [pauses] What advice would you give to women of today or like, our generation?

**LJ:** [pauses] I think advice that I would give is that it doesn't happen overnight, that it's a process. Find out what your values are, what's really important to you and stick to them. You know, the fit thing happened to be really important to me. I needed to work with people who I enjoyed working with, who had integrity, that I could trust, work through conflict those types of things. My bosses over the years have been incredibly important to me too. So if I got into a situation and the boss and I couldn't communicate and it wasn't right I would've had to get out of that because I knew that that wasn't going to work. The other thing is find a mentor. Alright? Don't wait for your company to assign you one or whatever but look to some women who maybe are a few years ahead or are doing what you might want to do or have values that you want to ascribe to and seek them out. I had women who were mentors I never even really told them they were my mentors, you know, some of them I did but some of them I didn't and I just watched them. And I listened and I paid attention and I saw what they did and then I kind of decided on my own path. But that's something that you can all do on your own to – it's always good to aspire, to do something. So, look around. See who some of these women are, and they're out there, in your generation they're really – they're out there. Don't pick ten of them, but pick a couple and, you know, focus in and I think that will take you very far. Get involved in your community – that also, takes you a long way. Hold firm to your beliefs and your values I guess and be financially responsible because it really pays off down the road.

**EP:** Do you feel you have a legacy?

**LJ:** Wow. A legacy, that's pretty big! So I guess a couple things just in my—in my year work-wise I do feel that in this year and given what I was doing prior to this job, one of the things that I am really proud of is that we have built a performance driven culture. And we've done that because it's part of our strategic plan to do so but we've been pretty successful at it. We've conducted engagement surveys – the employees certainly for the most part, it's like, 98% of them are willing to go above and beyond for this organization. They believe in the mission, they enjoy working here, and I think that's an important legacy. And some of things that we've done to pull that together, you know, I think I'd be happy to say that I was at the helm when we

implemented and maximized a performance driven culture and I think in the history of FCHP that's probably, I would say, my greatest legacy at the moment.

**EP:** Okay. Um....

**LJ:** These are getting harder!

**EP and CT:** [laugh]

**EP:** Is there anything else that we should be sure to include in this interview? That you think is important.

**LJ:** No...I don't think so. What do you guys think?

**EP:** [laughs]

**CT:** I think you gave us a great interview!

**EP:** I think you covered it!

**LJ:** Yeah?

**EP:** Is there anything---anybody else that you think that we should... talk to? Maybe here or any other women that you know?

**LJ:** Oh there's lots of 'em!

**CT:** [laughs]

**LJ:** Lots of 'em! You know there's one person here that I think would be very interesting for you to talk to her name is Mary Ritter, and she's our chief strategy officer and she grew up in the area too, so you might get – you know, if you're looking for someone who grew up in the area, and is a very successful woman, she serves on boards, she's a, she's a real class act. So, I could help you connect with her, if you'd like to do that?

**EP:** Well yeah, we'll...talk...

**LJ:** Do you need to go... vet her or something?

**EP:** Yeah [laughs]

**LJ:** Okay, you guys go ahead and vet her. She's had a career at Hanover Insurance as well. And then came over here but she's a woman who I think people could learn quite a bit from.

**EP:** Okay! Well if we... don't have time to then maybe like, future...

**LJ:** Someone else, yeah! I'll give you my card right you guys can contact me and I can help you get connected to her. I hope you found this helpful!

**EP:** Oh definitely!

**CT:** Yeah, this was very helpful.

**LJ:** Good, I'm glad!

**EP:** It was interesting!

**LJ:** I'm glad.

**CT:** You have a great story! [laughs] I'm glad we get to share it with everyone!

**LJ:** Yeah, I like my story! I'm actually happy with my story!

**CT and EP:** [laugh]

**EP:** Yeah you seem very content.

**LJ:** Yeah, yeah. I found my fit, you know, and not everybody gets to find that. God, you talk to people and they're in jobs – they hate these jobs, they're miserable, or they're in three different jobs or you know? And I'm so, I'm so lucky that I've found it. I'm very happy.

**EP:** And that's really like, all you can ask for.

**LJ:** It's all you can ask for, it's very rewarding. It really is. It's really rewarding. [pauses] Yup!

**EP:** All right! Are we good?

**CT:** Yeah! Thank you!

**LJ:** Okay? Okay.