The Upstander Ripple Effect Episode 8

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**SPEAKERS**

Jackie Congedo, Cori Silbernagel, Emily Kendall, Kevin Aldridge, Werner Coppel, Henry Fenichel

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:02

What do we mean by the upstander ripple effect,

**Werner Coppel** 00:06

stand up against hate and prejudice, even if it does not affect you

**Jackie Congedo** 00:13

from moral dilemmas in today's headlines, upstanders who rose for justice and stories of survival,

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:19

be prepared to walk away from this conversation inspired and motivated.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:28

Hello everybody, and welcome to the upstander ripple effect podcast, the last episode of 2024 I'm Jackie Congedo

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:36

and I'm Kevin Aldridge, and our theme for today's episode is one of gratitude, and so we're at that time of year coming out of thanksgiving and heading into Christmas and Hanukkah to religious and faith holidays that are essentially grounded in the idea of gratitude and having a deep thankfulness and appreciation for the good things that we have in life and and, you know, this is probably a good time to have that conversation, because, you know, the holidays can also be a time of great depression for a lot of people and a sense of loneliness. And so, good topic for us to have today on how do we, how do we channel that gratitude and and how gratitude plays a factor and, and in our hope for the future and our outlook on life, so good conversation for needed time.

**Jackie Congedo** 01:35

Yeah, yeah, for the end of the year, it's, it's a good time to kind of just reflect right and, and I think in moments like pivot points of reflection, we have the opportunity to kind of take stock of where we've been, think about where we're headed. So it's like what sits in between our past experiences and our hopes for the future, and this catalyst of gratitude is actually really important. And it's not just a fuzzy feel good thing there's there's real science behind the practice of gratitude and how that actually primes our brains to be more hopeful and to and the benefits of just general well being of health, related to the sort of taking stock in what you're grateful for. This. This stuff has been studied, researched by scientists. It's actual real data backed, you know, proof that this, this actually has this kind of interplay. So we're going to talk a little bit about that.

**Jackie Congedo** 02:34

But first, I just want to start, as we think about, sort of the theme of gratitude. It's an appropriate theme for the work that we do at the center, because really, so much of our work is grounded in this idea of what it is to be grateful and that comes that's a gift that we get from our survivor community, who came here out of the depths of some of the most horrific experiences you can imagine, and stepped forward with not just, you know, an attitude of gratitude, but you know, for the blessings that they did have, right, for the fact that they survived, for the people who helped them, but but then, you know, said, We're not just going to stop at being grateful. We want to make sure that we use our our voices to educate, to share these stories so other people can understand, you know, the lessons, yeah, and can take stock in, you know, in what they're grateful for as they come and they understand. You know, these stories of just how bad things could be.

**Kevin Aldridge** 03:45

Yeah.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:46

So there's a couple survivors I wanted to just sort of mention, and so many of them, I mean, I would say just about every story of survival that we have in the museum has a note, many notes, in some cases, of gratitude woven throughout, but the ones that sort of popped in my mind this morning, you know, this year, we lost, as I'd mentioned in a prior episode, Renate Neeman, who, you know, at her, at her funeral, her son, was reflecting on the gratitude that she was able to hold after all of these years, you know, she was separated from her parents. She was taken in, I think, by a Catholic, by a convent or a Catholic school, and as sort of, you know, a maid, essentially, and and her son later in life, asked her, you know, how, how did you not come out of that experience so bitter. And she said, well, because what I chose to focus on were the droplets of goodness in an ocean of evil, yeah, which is, I just think about droplets of goodness all the time now, thanks, thanks to that.

**Jackie Congedo** 04:54

And then there's the story of Al Miller and Mason Bailey, one of the first. And survivors. We first actually stories we talked about on the podcast, and that moment of him arriving, you know, with the Statue of Liberty and and the immigration, American immigration official after, you know, narrowly escaping Nazi Germany, his family, and then country hopping, where, basically they weren't wanted. Country after country after country, they arrive in New York, and the immigration official shows him just an act of kindness, saying, You know what, I know you forgot your papers. Hal remembers that moment and the look on his mother's face when he realized, you know, there he was and he didn't have his papers after all that. And he said, The immigration official says it's okay you go back and just, I'm sure they're in your cabin, and come back and your family will be here and it'll all be fine. And he did, and we know the end to the story. He went on to be a Richie boy, you know, serving in the American army in intelligence, and going back as, actually, as an interrogator. And we named the award the upstander award last year, after him the award for gratitude. Why was that? Well, because that moment of kindness unlocked this spirit of gratitude in him that changed the course of his life. And we, we gave the award to a young man named Mason Bailey in Northern Kentucky, who was born with cerebral palsy, and, you know, went through life wanting to be work in heavy machinery, was told he wouldn't going to be able to do it. Did it anyway. And you know, then no one would hire him after he got a certification. They were, they were, they were, you know, worried about the liability. And he said, Fine, I'll just start a lawn care business on my own. And he did, and he's still doing it. And when we asked him what his strength was, you would think, you know, perseverance, creativity, he said, gratitude, right? Because that's like the gateway, absolutely, to being able to do so many other things, is, is just taking stock in what you do have so, yeah, there's so many beautiful stories of gratitude that come from our survivors and from our work.

**Kevin Aldridge** 07:07

Yeah, you know, a few things stick out from that is, you know, gratitude is a matter of perspective, you know. So thinking about Renate, you know, she chose to focus on the droplets of goodness instead of the sea of evil. And that's a that is very much a perspective how you choose to look at the world. And it's, it's a reminder to me of a song that's one of my favorites. It's, it's, it's kind of a gospel song, and the lyrics say, no matter what you're going through, there's somebody doing worse than you, so be thankful for what you have, because the person doing bad could be you. And it's always a reminder of, you know, even when we're experiencing tough times, that the attitude of gratitude always says it could be worse. You know, it could be worse. So I'm thankful for, you know, whatever good, even in the midst of the worst situation that I might find I find myself in, is I've got to learn to, gotta learn to focus on that. Yeah, and it really is a mindset, because it runs so counter to how we normally think. And I think, you know, we may, we may be discussing here what, what Dan Tomasulo says about, you know, the preponderance, the percentage of our thoughts that you know, tend to focus on the negative versus the positive. You know, we tend to hang on and relive those negative things and spend very little time, you know, on on the positive. So shifting to this mindset of gratitude, you know, really is something that we have to be intentional about doing. And the second thought I had is that, you know, gratitude also unlocks this sort of pay it forward mentality, right?

**Jackie Congedo** 09:03

Yeah, yeah.

**Kevin Aldridge** 09:03

Because when you're gratitude, when you're grateful for experiences that you've had, people who've been influential on your life, things that you've had the opportunity to learn from, gratitude tends to activate it that in us and we get this sense of wanting to pay it forward to to to share with others. You know, our gratitude or extend kindness, you know, to other folks, because we're thankful for and we have an appreciation for what's been done for us. And so you know, recognizing those two things, you know, gratitude being a matter of perspective and recognizing that it unlocks, you know, kindness and gratefulness and positive acts that that encourages us to pay it forward, speaks to the power of gratitude.

**Jackie Congedo** 09:50

It's sort of the like kinetic energy behind the ripple effect. You know, when you when there's gratitude that hits you, you. You're more likely and sort of primed to pay that pay that forward. The science behind this is so interesting. So we had on the podcast a number of positive psychologists on talking about different strengths. And we had Dr Dan Tomasulo in New York on a number of months ago, talking about this idea that you can actually acquire a more hopeful outlook. So it's important like this, gratitude and perspective and hope. I don't think yes, gratitude, perspective and hope. I believe they are all part of the value family within the character strengths, classification of transcendence, right? And so it's easy for us to think, well, you know, I'm not a hopeful person or a grateful person, or someone who has good perspective, because things have not gone well for me, and once those things go well for me, I will be more grateful, more hopeful, have better perspective. But really, we know from the research that it's, it's, it's actually the choice that you make to embrace those things that sort of fuels a cycle. And so Dan highlights his research around acquired hopefulness, which, like I said back then, I still say now, we can always use more of every day that goes by. And he talks about, you know what you were saying, Kevin, that by default, our brains are hardwired to hold on to the bad, right? Because that's the that's the survival instinct. It's like, Oh, wow. That was painful, traumatic, not good, not safe. And so if I just don't let go of that, then it won't happen to me again, right, right? But if we actually practice gratitude intentionally, deliberately, we can rewire our brains. We can change our biochemistry to instead, to sort of prime our neural pathways to have a more hopeful Outlook. So, yeah, so it's just, it's fascinating, and I've seen it work. I mean, I, as Dan was telling me this a couple months ago, I'm like, okay, all right, I hear you, and that's cool. But, like, does that really work. And he was saying, try it. Try a practice of gratitude every day where you just, you just flat out, speak out loud three things you're grateful for, yeah. And I did it with my kids, and it was, it's, it's actually really impressive, yeah,

**Kevin Aldridge** 12:32

yeah. I mean, again, it's a, it's sort of a, it's shifting to a positivity mindset. I mean, if you, if your mindset is always one of negative or hopelessness or, for lack of a better word, oh, woe is me. It's hard to pull yourself out of that. And things, if things, if you perceive things going badly, and that's your attitude, it seems like things tend to spiral, because everything that happens now becomes a bigger

**Jackie Congedo** 13:03

production biochemistry, right? Actually, there's a reason for that, right? Yeah. And

**Kevin Aldridge** 13:07

so it's like, it can even be a small thing, but if it's a small thing that doesn't go your way, then it's just like one more thing that you add to the stack that that gives you a sense of hopelessness, that it's never going to get better. But if you, if you begin to take stock. You know, take an inventory every day of, yeah, this didn't go right, but I'm thankful for this. I'm thankful for my kids. I'm thankful, you know, hey, I may not have the job I want, but at least I've got a job. You know, there are people who aren't working, who can't make ends meet, or who don't have anything, you know, if you if you learn to take stock of the things that you do have and not take those things for granted, it does give you a different perspective. It goes back to what I was saying is, there's always someone who would gladly trade places with, yeah, and that's that's hard to think when you're or even believe when you're in a tough spot, or you're experiencing some hardship in your life, but, but there truly are people who you know don't have movement in their limbs, who are, you know, maybe lying on their death beds, or, you know, are homeless, or who would gladly, you know, take your worst moment, you know, and it's sort of like that recognition that can give you gratitude, even when things aren't going your way, just having that humility to say, you know, what things could be. Things might not be 100% the way that I want them to be, but they could always be. They could be worse. They could be a lot worse.

**Jackie Congedo** 14:40

Yep, yep. We had been talking about this earlier, you know, noted that perspective is actually necessary for gratitude. Yeah, right. And the sort of a key blocker of gratitude is this idea of entitlement. Yeah, thinking that like, you know, well, I'm counting back from 100 and so I deserve 100 everything. Should go right all the time for right, and so then everything that, it's your accountant, well, this didn't, this didn't, this didn't. And there's only downhill to go from there. Yeah, instead of thinking about, wow, when something, you know when something goes wrong, retraining our brains to focus on what went right? Yeah, absolutely. And that's the whole that is actually, as I say, that allowed the whole character strengths mentality is, instead of coming at this from a deficit and talking about what's wrong with people right, diagnosing the problems, let's, let's instead identify the strengths that they were able to use to, you know, to persevere, to you know, the things they can activate to to, you know, to make themselves stronger and to make the world better. And

**Kevin Aldridge** 15:46

so, yeah, I think that, you know, it's important to really hone in on that, on that sense of entitlement. Because I think this is one of the things that helps us sort of move toward gratitude. Because the reality is, is that life is difficult. Life is not fair. Life is challenging. And I think that if you are in the percentage of people who are blessed to have way more good days than you have bad days, you got to be grateful, extremely grateful for that, but I think what happens is this is where that sense of entitlement comes in. Is like when things are rolling and things are good for us, we expect that it's always going to be that way. And that's not how life is that if you're fortunate to live long enough, you're going to experience peaks and valleys in life that are not attacking you, but it's that's that's life, that's how it happens. It It happens to all. It happens to everybody. It just becomes much more personal and intense when it happens to us, and we start to think, like, Well, why is this happening to me? Well, we're not, we're not special in that regard, like we're not exempt from the challenges of life. But it's that sense of entitlement that somehow or another, we expect, we expect that we're going to dodge what life brings, and we become spoiled. And I think that when things do happen, we can experience ungratefulness in that where, where we begin to complain and think, like, why is this happening to me? Well, who should it be happening to right? It's like, that's life. That's what that's what happens. And so it's the bumps that allow us to have gratitude, to appreciate when things are going well, like, Man, I gotta, I gotta be grateful for this, and just ride this train as long as I can, because eventually it's got to pull into the station at some point. And so

**Jackie Congedo** 17:52

The heater is gonna go out, yeah, my kid's gonna come down with, you know, an ear infection, both of which have happened this week for you and me.

**Kevin Aldridge** 17:59

Yeah.

**Jackie Congedo** 17:59

And here we are talking about gratitude Absolutely because, you know, there's I've never felt more grateful for my health than I do when I finally start feeling better after I've been sick. That's the reality. But, you know, the other mindset can be, I'm so upset about the time I lost, or how bad I felt, or that that happened to me, well, instead, just allow yourself to take stock in the fact that that's not your every day. You know, well,

**Kevin Aldridge** 18:23

we'll think about, think about the pandemic, right? Yeah, how many? How? You know, that was a terrible year and a half that we all went through. We all lost a lot of time. Some people lost their lives. I mean, there was a lot of loss over that, over that year and a half that we went through the pandemic. But how often do you hear people even talk about that now? And it's like we've, we've moved past that in the couple of years now. I'm sure there are people who are still dealing with the effects of that, whether that's health wise or or dealing with loved ones who were lost during that period. But by and large, as a society, we've, we've moved past that. We don't, we don't, we aren't really dealing with that anymore. And the you know, maybe we don't express it, but I got to believe that there's intense gratitude, oh my god, among most people, that we've gotten back to, you know, some semblance of of normalcy. And yeah, you know in our daily lives that we didn't have during that during that period, and I think if we look back on it, we're grateful to be able to be in a studio today and not, not be masked up and all of these things like that's that's something that that you've got to take stock of.

**Jackie Congedo** 19:37

I was just saying that I want to challenge everybody to start doing these every day, consciously, out loud, talk about three things that you're grateful for. Do it with your family. Do it with your friends. Do it with your kids. And it never occurred to me, since I've been doing this for the past year or so, that every day I could have just added a fourth and that is. Is that we are not locked inside, staring at each other, worried about, you know, who's going to get sick and who might, you know, who might not recover. I mean, that's that is a huge gift, that you're right, how quickly it falls off the radar of things that just, you know, well, of course, that's the way it is. Right. We all walk around in the world, and people don't wear masks, and, you know, we can eat out with our friends at restaurants and, you know, go shopping without thinking about it. Gosh, I remember when I was in the shopping for appliances with like an eye mask on double mask. I don't think you could see much of my face at all. That was not so long ago. Yeah, so

**Kevin Aldridge** 20:36

and think about that. I mean, you would have given anything...

**Jackie Congedo** 20:41

Oh my gosh, yeah. I remember thinking, if I could just go back, yeah, you know when all the when the shutdown happened, if I could just go back three weeks ago, man, I would eat out every night, yeah? And I would, like, you know, I wouldn't just, just to be in a grocery store. Made me feel so connected and alive? Yeah, I just remember thinking, this might never happen again. This might just be our normal forever. But do

**Kevin Aldridge** 21:07

you, but do you give thanks? But think about, think about so many things that we lost over that year. Didn't have access to, that when you think about it on a day to day basis, you don't give thanks for that

**Jackie Congedo** 21:17

No,

**Kevin Aldridge** 21:17

like you don't. You don't give thanks for hey, I can go out and have dinner with my spouse and kids at a restaurant. We don't, we don't think of that as something to be grateful for. We think of it as, this is what's supposed to this is what is supposed to be.

**Jackie Congedo** 21:32

That's the entitlement.

**Kevin Aldridge** 21:33

So it's like, even if you take it to you know, just thankful I have my eyesight, thankful I can hear for those who lost their taste buds as a result of COVID and couldn't taste food like, Thank God that you know I can taste delicious foods that I that I love to eat like, it's all of these things that, if you learn to condition yourself to just say, Man, if I lost any of that, It would be horrible to my to my day in and day out lifestyle, and those sorts of things are things that regardless of whatever else is going on in my life, I should have gratitude for and be thankful and grateful for. So there, there are a million things people might not think about it, but there are a million things every day that you can be as should be grateful for, but we take it for granted. Yeah, so we don't have it anymore.

**Jackie Congedo** 22:24

Well, this is why. And then, you know, we can move to some of our some of our interviews that that I think fall beautifully under this theme. This is why the study of human adversity, right chapters of human adversity are such rich landscapes to explore this theme of gratitude. Because, you know, the idea that it's sort of when we're when we're immersed in the histories of the Holocaust, civil rights, slavery, any genocide, you know, other horrific, not to compare, but similar, you know, similarly adverse the pandemic. It's, it's these sort of moments. It's the droplets of goodness right amidst these times that are so stark. They really, they pop out. And researchers have hit on that. I found a study, actually, that was done in 2015 by neuroscientists at University of Southern California who were looking to map the feelings of gratitude in the brain. And you can imagine that they picked Holocaust history to help them do that. So they actually picked two dozen Millennials with no connection to the Holocaust, and they showed them documentaries about the rise of Nazism and the camps and liberation while they were laying inside the MRI scanner, which I can't imagine. The only thing that would be worse than sitting inside an MRI scanner without any way to get out is to then watch Holocaust films while you are that just gives me anxiety. Yeah, I agree. But they got through that and and that was intended to mirror the experience of sort of going through a museum, a Holocaust Museum, and then they they sort of shared with them testimonies of survivors who had experienced rescue and, you know, even sort of shared some scenarios of, you know, imagine this for yourself, and they were able to see the way the brain lit up in different areas with gratitude, and the way those neural pathways connected to other parts of The brain that are responsible for, you know, reward, fairness, self awareness, these kind of positive feelings. And so the connection between gratitude and actual well being, you know, just more evidence to back that up. And I just think it's so interesting that, you know, scientists who have no reason to study necessarily (positive psychologists) the Holocaust, are using this as a as a landscape, to understand these emotions and these, these feelings of gratitude.

**Kevin Aldridge** 25:08

Yeah, you know, I it, and I know we'll move on to to some of our stories and highlights here today. But I always think it's interesting, you know, as as as someone of faith, you know, our religious texts are very clear on these emotions and the impact for us living healthy, productive lives. And so a lot of times we, you know, even for unbelievers, you know, who might not believe in in, you know, the face that we subscribe to science, you know, verifies, oh my gosh, yeah, that that our faith tells us all the time. And it's like, oh well, you know, these people study it, and so now there's validity to it. But it's like, hey, you know, this is a this is the tenant of what our faith tells us is necessary to to to live healthy, strong, productive lives, to make connections with one another. And it's it's good to see. You know, I always kind of chuckle and smile when I see science that verifies, you know, what our faith tells us. You know, a lot of times people see science and faith as diametrically opposed to each other. But I view it in a different context, that science is all often the confirmation of spiritual things, of the explaining and helping us to understand, you know, how God has ordered the universe and has set things up, you know, through, through God's design, and it's, it's always great to see that, that confirmation. So I'll, I'll get off of my pulpit. We can move on.

**Jackie Congedo** 26:47

 We welcome you on your pulpit anytime. Kevin, you are, you are, you are great on the pulpit. It's interesting thinking about like, you know, it does match so well. You know your role here, and your role at the Enquirer, and your role in your church like you can see how all of these things have sort of beautifully woven themselves to

**Kevin Aldridge** 27:06

I wish I could say it was by my design, because it's interesting. Every space that I find myself in where I'm doing work was if you'd asked 15, 16, year old, even 22 year old, Kevin Aldridge, what he would be doing. None of these things would be. None of these things would have been, yeah, but they were, but they were all talents and gifts that I had been gifted with that, you know, just came together in the right way at the right time and again.

**Jackie Congedo** 27:35

And I should, I actually shouldn't say that you're not doing basketball, because you are also doing that. I am

**Kevin Aldridge** 27:42

just just not in the NBA, like, like 15, 16, year old me would have hoped, but,

**Jackie Congedo** 27:47

Well, there's still time. That's okay. All right. So pivoting to our stories for for this month, the story from our archive is that of one of our one of our amazing survivors, Henry Fenichel, is still with us and very active with the center. He was born in the Netherlands. Nazis deported and murdered his father in Auschwitz. He survived as a child with his mother, first in hiding, then both in Westerbork and Bergen Belsen. They made their way to what is now Israel as part of a prisoner exchange. He immigrated to the United States and was a professor at UC in physics, and he's now retired, and he speaks regularly with student groups and community groups about his experience.

**Kevin Aldridge** 28:33

So we have two short clips from Henry's episode of hear my story to share with you. The first is Cori Silbernagel, Director of Collections and Exhibitions, starting the episode by thanking Henry, he was the first survivor she recalls meeting when she began here at HHC. She had never known a survivor before, and it changed her and how she approaches her work.

**Cori Silbernagel** 28:58

Hi, Henry. It is lovely to have you here today. I'm I'm so happy you came down to the center to talk with us. Before you share your story, I want to share a little story of mine for you.

**Henry Fenichel** 29:11

Um, it'll be nice to hear.

**Cori Silbernagel** 29:13

Yeah. So I started working at the Holocaust center in 2015 and you were one of the first Holocaust survivors I met ever I came into the work not knowing very much about the Holocaust and not feeling, not feeling personally connected. And I think it's because of your story and the story of others that I've met over these years that you know there's truly no other work that I feel like I should be doing. So thank you. That's impressive. I think it's incredibly important that you continue sharing your story and

**Henry Fenichel** 30:01

Thank you. I appreciate hearing that. But

**Cori Silbernagel** 30:08

do you have hope for the future?

**Henry Fenichel** 30:15

I think so. I mean, there are some issues that will learn, perhaps, to learn how to deal with them. But ultimately, there ought to be enough of people, positive people like you, folks over here, to be able to make sure that you go in the right direction.

**Cori Silbernagel** 30:30

Yes, I agree. I think if the upstanding citizens continue to speak and act, that overcomes a lot of problems that we face today.

**Henry Fenichel** 30:45

You're absolutely right.

**Cori Silbernagel** 30:48

Well, I want to thank you so much for talking with me today. Every time we speak, I learned something new about you and and again, as I started prior to meeting you and other Holocaust survivors, I had little understanding, and I am honored to be in a position where I can sit here today and say that that I understand A little bit more, and I'm very excited to continue talking with you many more times to come.

**Henry Fenichel** 31:27

Thank you very much, and I speak for I think, the other survivors as well. We really appreciate you and the organization and the support you're giving us. We're not left alone somewhere to wherever we have a home. You're part of our home.

**Cori Silbernagel** 31:44

Oh, thank you, Henry. Thank you.

**Jackie Congedo** 31:47

Well, on behalf of Cori and Henry, you're welcome to everyone out there for for if you don't have a tear in your eye, you you might just be have a heart of stone out there, because just to hear how these, you know, take the context aside how these two people have changed each other,

**Kevin Aldridge** 32:11

yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 32:13

and the gratitude that they each have for each other is just really powerful. And it seems simple, just to say thank you. You know I'm grateful for you, but but even witnessing those acts of gratitude, I think, is enough to really change the people who are listening.

**Kevin Aldridge** 32:32

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I think if you if you saw the interaction, you listen to the voice when we talk about gratefulness, gratefulness is not just some kind of passing, like pleasantry, like something that we do that's politically correct, like it's a it's a deep, heartfelt appreciation. And you felt that coming through in their interaction, in their their their voices, their facial expressions, you could see that it actually meant something.

**Jackie Congedo** 33:05

It lit up the person to say it, and the person to receive it.

**Kevin Aldridge** 33:08

Absolutely, absolutely. And you know, that's that's always good to see. And like you said, it's a, it's an energy transference from one to another that that not just getting and understanding the appreciation factor for yourself, but then expressing it to the person that you're grateful to, or the situation that you're grateful to, activates again something in them that you know now they're returning the expressions. And I just thought it was great, you know, you know what Henry was talking about. And just in terms of of his gratitude for feeling like he was not alone, that he that he had a home, that that, again, someone was was listening, you know, to his story, cared about his story, right? Because you got to care about it, to go through the work of the the exceptional work that you guys do, to to listen to the stories, to package it, to present it like, there's, there's care that's involved in that. And, and I can't imagine being on the other end of that, being the person whose story is being handled with such care, like that's that's got to, you know, engender the type of gratitude that I think we saw. Yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 34:23

I mean, and I'll just, I just want to also give major respect to Cori Silbernagel, who is our Director of Collections and Exhibitions, and really just the caretaker of our stories in so many ways, our artifacts, our collection, our exhibits. And you know, Cori, it's hard to imagine someone who could be more well suited for this work. She just cares for the people and the things. Things, meaning, objects, artifacts. You know, that. To help to tell these stories in a way that's like her own family, her own personal memories and things. I mean, it's, it's really beautiful to watch, and I remember, you know, thinking about what you were saying about Henry, and just being grateful that someone was there to listen and to hear his story and keep the story and share the story. We have a portrait book coming out. It's at the printer right now, hopefully by the time people are listening, it will be out and available. But it's a portrait of 40 some Holocaust survivors, local Holocaust survivors, and a little handwritten quote from each one of them and their biographies. And about half of these survivors had never shared their story before, and Cori was the one who was going in in these people's homes to take their pictures and to hear from them and to document their stories. And you can just tell by her demeanor, she's just so again, just born to do that. She reflects often. I've heard her share this a number of times that one of the survivors, you know, when she thanked them for sharing, they said, Well, you're the first person to ask,

**Kevin Aldridge** 36:10

yeah. I mean, think about that. And I would encourage everybody who's listening to share your stories, because here's one of the things that I took away from what, what Cori said she talked about her disconnection to, you know, the Holocaust, and that, that part of the, you know, the Jewish experience, and it was through the hearing of the stories that she found not only connection, But deep appreciation. And I think all of us can say, you know, as an African American, you know, hearing the the stories of what you know, my forefathers and mothers went through what they endured for me to be able to be here today gives me an and do what I do, gives me an appreciation for their sacrifice, their hard work, their their pain, their struggle, that makes you thankful for them. And so I think like you know, if you're a parent, share your story with your kids, so that they have an appreciation and a gratefulness for who you are and what you've done to enable them to be able to enjoy whatever life it is that they have. I, you know, and make them listen, you know. You know, that's the important thing. Like my I feel like my father tried as best he could to share some of his stories, you know. But sometimes I was too busy on my own thing with my own friends to want to sit down and take time to listen to that and you know, as a 50 year old adult now, there's not a day that goes by that I wish I hadn't listened more intently to some of those stories I greatly appreciate. You know, my dad and my mom and everything that they did for me, but I wish I'd have taken more time to listen, you know, document, you know, take in those stories. So if you've got kids out there, definitely make sure that they they know your story, they understand.

**Jackie Congedo** 38:15

And this is the time of year when we give gifts, and I'm trying to come up with eight gifts for my kids for Hanukkah. And I think I might just be like, so you get a toy every other night, and on the off nights, the gift is a story. I'm gonna tell you a story about the people who came before you, who you are, yeah, and what you have to be grateful for in in the just those things, yeah, maybe even just gonna start giving stories as gifts,

**Kevin Aldridge** 38:37

absolutely, or even even, uh even, recording a video, yeah, yeah. Like, even if they don't listen to it now, you know, one day, yeah. Just like, you know, we have the stories of our Holocaust survivors that will live on. You know, through this museum and other means, think about that in your own family, that even if your kids are too into themselves and what they've got going on right now to listen, there will be one day, yeah, where they'll appreciate you know, you having having done that? Yeah, absolutely.

**Jackie Congedo** 39:07

So the next story we have is an upstander story, and this one is from Emily Kendall,

**Kevin Aldridge** 39:19

yeah, this month's upstander is 2024 Upstander Award winner, Emily Kendall. Emily and her husband Mark, founded EmpowerMe Living to transform housing options for people with disabilities.

**Jackie Congedo** 39:31

Emily credits her son, Luke, who has Down syndrome, with inspiring her and her husband's work, and she says that one of his strengths is gratitude, and she learns from him every day. Let's listen.

**Jackie Congedo** 39:42

You know, we talk in the museum about people meeting their moment, upstanders who meet their moment. And it's just like hearing about the fact that you've been preparing your whole life to be able to meet this moment. You know? I mean, you didn't even in a way that probably. Never occurred to you until you know now, but the fact that you have this experience, that you've built the skills and the network and the awareness around you know how to work in this space, and then you know, and then there's a moment of need, right? That's that's like the the common story of an upstander is, there's there's strength, there's preparation that I don't even know they're preparing for, and then there's a need. And the difference is the choice that you make to lean in or not, and the fact that you and Mark have so powerfully leaned into this is really inspiring. It's really inspiring. Well,

**Emily Kendall** 40:36

thank you. I want to say that one of the things that I love about your mission is that anyone is standard, yes, I want to emphasize that for listeners, yeah, I am. I am just a middle aged mom from Cincinnati, Ohio, right, right. That's most of the time I'm trying to get three children out the door and get my cup of coffee in, yep, and enjoy it before it gets cold, right? Yep, yep. But that's the beauty that this power is within all of us. All of us have this ability. Luke, my son has this ability, and I say that he teaches us more than we teach him, and I wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't for him. So he is. His name means light. The name Luke means light, and that is very much what he is. Wow, there's my light that keeps me going. Oh, my

**Jackie Congedo** 41:38

goodness. Well, quite clearly, and he's doing a good job, because you are, you are rolling right along. There's been a lot of research done. I'm thinking about our friends at the via Institute on character character, and in particular Ryan niemeck, who has done a lot of research around strengths in people with disabilities. It's like abilities within disabilities, essentially strengths within disabilities, and it so powerfully connects to what you were sharing about your son. What do you feel like his strengths are? What has he taught you? My gosh,

**Emily Kendall** 42:12

in a world where we are constantly seeking, you know, presence and focus and, you know, there's all these apps better help and calm and the meditating, and we're all seeking for this like Luke inherently already has that Wow. Luke lives his life in the present moment. That's not to say that he does not have his emotions and feelings. He has them and he moves forward, I would say that one of his strengths is definitely gratitude.

**Jackie Congedo** 42:43

Yeah, yeah. Well, that's what allows you to live in the present. Yes,

**Emily Kendall** 42:47

it is gratitude. And he is not too worried about tomorrow or harder, not worried about, Yeah, yesterday. He's like, we're here right now.

**Kevin Aldridge** 42:57

Man, really, really, very powerful. And I think that, you know, stories like Luke's, and I, you know, I always find people with disabilities very inspiring in terms of their approach to life, because if there's anybody who you would say has a right to be angry, be angry, be sad, be depressed, to feel like you know you didn't get a fair shake. A lot of times it's people with disabilities, but you know, a lot of times when you encounter those folks, they're some of the most joyful people that you'll meet. You know. And I think it's partly because of the attitude that the Emily talked about, you know, just this sense of gratitude, this sense of, you know, being thankful, you know, for what, for what they do have, and not allowing what they don't have to be impediments to them trying to live life to the fullest. And I think, you know, I think, as she said, you know, Luke teaches them more than they teach him. And I think it's a lesson that you know, that all of us can learn. You know from that, you know we need to be more grateful for the things that that we do have, because even someone who might have less than you in terms of of physical capabilities or developmental capabilities, these are still folks who who move forward and and she talked about living in, you know, living In the moment again, just going back to another, uh, another faith thing, you know, Scripture talks about not worrying about tomorrow, uh or fretting about yesterday, but living today. You know, appreciate today. You know, today has enough in and of itself that, yeah, you know, one. Should be preoccupied with or be concerned about, to live in the moment, to appreciate moments. And a lot of times it's hard for us to be mindful of the moment and appreciate the moment because we're worried about, you know, what's coming next? Yeah, I can't even enjoy, you know, this concert that I'm at because I'm trying to video record it, because I'm thinking about who I'm going to share it with after I get so, you know, I haven't even been able to fully immerse myself in in the situation and be grateful for this, this work of art, or whatever it is that I'm experiencing, because we're, we're always so fragmented and here and there. So I just thought those were some some powerful comments from that.

**Jackie Congedo** 45:48

Yeah, that she's she and her husband, Mark, and their whole family. I mean, they're really incredible. They won the Frank Gerson award for creativity this past two years ago. I'm sorry, two years ago was our first awards. And, yeah, it's just an amazing story of people meeting their moment, you know, working, I think they were in commercial real estate, and then they had a child with IDD, and realized there was a need for housing that was not being met. And they said, well, may as well be us, you know, if not us, then who? Yeah, they just activated and so, but the fact that gratitude is a part of that recipe for them, and something that, you know, fuels them coming from their son, is really special. And, I mean, it's right alongside with, you know, Mason Bailey, right? Who won? You know, born with cerebral palsy, number one strength is gratitude, right? There's something to learn there. I mean, absolutely, open your eyes and pay attention to that. It's like, the older I get, the more I realize it's just the more I realize this. I watch it in my kids, you know, I haven't I have a firstborn who is a typical overachiever, first born, and she's always harping on the perfection and wanting to, you know, and then I, and then I have a younger daughter who is who's really concerned about finding the rainbows in the cloudy sky. And it's not to say that one strength is better. We need both, right? But I think as someone who's primed for the first piece. Naturally, I'm now in my as I as I get older, and as I watch my kids, I'm I'm more cognizant of trying to cultivate that look for the rainbow strength sure in myself. Because it's not, it's not something where, you know, I didn't pop out like our youngest, who's just looking for rainbows every day. Yeah, I popped out looking for the like, the what's the next thing I can do to, you know, to make sure I get it right. And so I just think this idea of these transcendent strengths are so important, and they require a certain sort of maturity and perspective to really take stock in,

**Kevin Aldridge** 47:54

yeah. And I think, I think, as you said, both of those are great strengths. And I think what we want, I think what most of us want to do is kind of try to find the balance there, right? Like, it's like, perfection is unachievable as it is still should be a goal to is an admirable goal to strive for. Like, try to be better excellent today than I was yesterday. Would be the, be the best that I can you know, those are the messages that we that we teach. But I think even in in the midst of that, we have to learn how to give ourselves grace and be grateful for and thankful for where we are. While I'm not where I want to be, I'm not where I was right and where I'm at, it's not too bad, yeah, and so, so that's the that's the looking for the rainbows, even as we strive for what's beyond the rainbow, right? And, and I think that's the sweet spot, you know, that that most of us want to try to hit. I just want to share this because it's a story that I use over and over again, and it has, and it has to do with with a person with disabilities, or as a video I might have shared this on a podcast once before, now that I think about it, but it was a video that I saw probably about a year, year or so ago, and it was of a mother who had no arms and she was caring for her child, and in one leg she held her baby, and With the other leg, she used her feet to hold the bottle and feed her baby with the feet. You

**Jackie Congedo** 49:26

have not shared the story before, because I would remember this story. It's a

**Kevin Aldridge** 49:30

video that's out there, if you can find it. It's one of the most amazing things. And she's not only feeding the baby with the bottle, but then she takes a napkin, uses her foot, wipes the baby's mouth off and everything, just as any mother would do if she had, you know, arms. And it was the most amazing thing that I had ever seen in that it said to me, like, Here is someone with every reason, every excuse to say, Can't, feel I can't. Maybe, yeah. Can't do it, but she used what she had at her disposal. And I'm sure that that probably took an incredible amount of practice, you know, think about, think about how many, how many fails were probably involved in that before she actually got the opportunity to be able to get to the place where she was, where she did it so expertly, and it was just very it was very inspiring to me, and I was thankful for seeing that, because it did shift my it shifted my mind from a can't attitude that like, it's not a matter of capability, right? It's a matter of mindset, yeah, mental capacity. You know that we can do amazing things if we just have the right attitude, the right mindset, that that you know, being grateful for what you do have, and learning how to take what you do have and and try to be excellent with that.

**Jackie Congedo** 49:43

So that's and that's the pivot at the end of the year we should all be finding ourselves in, which is, okay, I'm gonna reflect back. How do I take stock in the good? Yeah, so that I can project that for myself in 2025 for my friends, for my community. And by doing that, the exercise of doing that, and other people seeing you do that, it has the kind of effect that this video had on you, which is to say that's possible. Yeah, that's a possible way to be, that's a possible way to live. Things are possible. So, you know, it's good for us, but it's also good for the people who are in our spaces and our networks and our families and our communities to see us do that. To wrap things up for the end of the year, I just wanted to share a few things. First, a couple of shameless plugs, which actually have a lot to do with what we talked about. We have a incredibly busy January in the museum coming up. We are so grateful, speaking of gratitude to the Schneider family, Hank and Anita Schneider and their children, Ben and Ronna Schneider and Micah and Jessica Max and even their grandchildren, actually, who came together to support an endowment that's providing free admission in January into perpetuity. So if you have not seen the museum, come in January. It's free and and listen to these stories. We have a beautiful new audio tour that we just launched, so you don't even need a tour guide. You can come and listen and take your time. It's a great way to start your year with a grateful note.

**Kevin Aldridge** 52:25

Absolutely, and even if you haven't, if you have been to the museum, look, I've been to the museum a couple of times, and it's a pretty expansive place, and like, you don't get to absorb like you can come to the museum sometimes and just spend, like, a day or a half day, like, with just a couple of exhibits there to really just kind of, like, absorb it. So I think, you know, even if you have been take advantage of the opportunity to come and make multiple trips and spend some time,

**Jackie Congedo** 52:55

yeah, and we have, you know, speaking of another thing in January, so if you're coming and you've already, you've already been to the museum. Come back, because we have a brand new we're going to be launching a brand new testimony, brand new testimonies in our dimensions and testimony gallery. So this is this amazing interactive experience. If you've never experienced this before, it's something you really ought to do, where you can come and have a conversation with a survivor in real time. So this is sort of facilitated through natural language. You know, there's an AI algorithm that pairs questions and answers. It's not an AI experience. The answers, the recorded answers that we have from our survivors, are real answers. They are not developed by a computer. They are actually taped from real people. But there's an algorithm that is sort of adapt adaptively, learns the more you you engage with it to source the real clip that is most responsive to your question. Anyway, it's an amazing experience and and in January, we're launching the first local testimony that we've been able to have in that gallery. And it is the story of Henry Fenichel, Henry, in his own words, sharing his story, nice, really, a powerful experience. And Henry, who I just love for so many reasons, he said he's going to have to come down and see what he says to himself. He can't wait to talk to himself.

**Kevin Aldridge** 54:20

Imagine that conversation with yourself. I mean, I do that probably more than is healthy, but I think you

**Jackie Congedo** 54:27

just did that. Actually, just did that. Yeah, so come down talk to Henry anytime in January, for free. We're so excited about this, and then we'll be we actually also are sort of launching a second testimony around 1940s day. So towards the middle of '25 Al Miller, we also were fortunate enough to capture his testimony in this format when he was still with us. And so that is ready to go, and we'll be launching right around 1940s day at the museum center, towards the middle of the year. So we have a we. Have an action packed January lined up. We want to see everybody at the museum. And I would be remiss if I didn't also thank Bob and Lori Fregolle and the Jewish Foundation which made those Dimensions in Testimony captures possible, both incredibly generous, generous funders of those that initiative. And then lastly, I thought we could just go out on a note of gratitude for for the work that we were able to do together. And so, you know, we were talking Kevin about, you know, how to sort of frame this, how to think about it. And I think really, you know, in the my practice of gratitude, like I've said now six or seven times with my kids, we talk about three things with what three things are we grateful for? I don't know why three. It's a good number. And sometimes actually, they'll say, Mom, can I say a fourth or I have a fifth? And I know it's really working, you know, and you can come up with more than three. But for today, let's just suffice to suffice it to say that, you know, the three things that I think we're really grateful for here at the Upstander Ripple Effect, at the Holocaust and Humanity Center, are the people who are courageous enough to let us tell their stories, our survivors, our liberators, their descendants, our upstanders, who have the courage to have the lived experience and then to entrust those stories with us, to share them. So grateful, so grateful for them every day, people who make the storytelling possible, right? So that's you. That's our amazing crew, Bob and Josh and Anne and Ron and the staff at our at our museum and our and our board and our volunteers and our donors who generously give of their of their resources and their time and their passion and their ambassadorship to make sure that we seize the moment to tell these stories before they're lost to history. Yeah. And then lastly, the people who listen, right? Because storytelling requires listeners. It's not just happening in a vacuum, right? The Act of, we saw that with Cori and with Henry, the act of sharing your own humanity and having someone receive that is a really special inner exchange of gifts, right?

**Kevin Aldridge** 54:36

Absolutely.

**Jackie Congedo** 54:51

So gratitude to the people whose stories we are fortunate and privileged enough to tell, to the people who make that possible, and to our amazing listeners and audiences at the museum and our programs here, you know, in our podcast, we're just immeasurably grateful for the opportunity to do this work and for all that you give us.

**Kevin Aldridge** 57:50

Absolutely I am, I am so grateful to be a part of this, this great journey and this great experience. I'm grateful for the stories, the perspectives, I think, all of which have contributed to, you know, making me be a better person and to be more empathetic toward towards others. And just, you know, really, again, we talk about perspective. You know, it takes perspective to have gratitude, but gratitude also increases your perspective as well. And so I'm grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this. I'm grateful for your friendship and all of the great folks who help make this this possible. And there are some great folks. I mean, we have this is one of the things I look most forward to in my month is coming in and doing this, and, you know, getting to hear the stories of folks on the crew and what's been going on, and it's just great. It's a great opportunity and and so glad to be a part of it.

**Jackie Congedo** 58:54

It's, yeah, it is definitely, what is yours half

**Kevin Aldridge** 58:58

full, yeah, probably a little less than those who

**Jackie Congedo** 59:00

are listening or looking at our water glasses. So I'm just gonna say both of ours are half full, even though yours is

**Kevin Aldridge** 59:06

negative way emptier than mine. Maybe I could have said a little bit more than a third of the way full instead of less than half. That was That wasn't very great. Mine

**Jackie Congedo** 59:17

is just about full. Okay, mine is maybe it couldn't even get any fuller than it is, and that's thanks to all of you. So thanks again. We'll be back in 2025 with more episodes, and as always, you know how to reach us in the show notes. Please send us an email or a tweet or a can you call it a tweet? Still,

**Kevin Aldridge** 59:36

I don't know. Is it an X? I don't you know. Call it a post, a post,

**Jackie Congedo** 59:42

you know, let us know what you're thinking as you're listening and and if you engage in your own gratitude practice, tell us how it's going. I'm really curious. I'm telling you, it will make you a believer overnight, the way my kids have really transformed through this practice of just on the way to school, "What are three things you're grateful for?" So give it a try and let us know what you think, and we'll see you next year. Let us know your thoughts on this episode. Our email is in the show notes. You can listen anytime on Spotify, Apple podcasts or visit Holocaust and humanity.org/podcast. You can also connect with us on Instagram and Tiktok @holocaustandhumanity and X Facebook @CincyHHC. The Upstander Ripple Effect is a production of the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. The Center's mission is to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust inspire action today. This series is part of the Cynthia & Harold Guttman Family Center for Storytelling. Visit us in person at historic union terminal in Cincinnati, Ohio, or online anytime at holocaustinhumanity.org. Managing Producer is Anne Thompson. Consulting Producer is Joyce Kamen. Technical Producer is Robert Mills, and Technical Director is Josh Emerson. The opening sequence is by Ken Furman. Select music is by Kick Lee, and this is recorded at Technical Consulting Partner studios in Cincinnati, Ohio.