



Creating a Trauma-Informed Organization

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SPEAKERS

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA, Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 00:15

Hello, and welcome to Season Two of Lights Camera Community Action, a podcast brought to you by The New York State Community Action Association, or NYSCAA for short, where we talk with members of community action agencies and other nonprofit and human service organizations about the issues that affect the people we support. My name is Heidi Barcomb, Program and Communications Director for NYSCAA. And I'll be your host today. NYSCAA is the hub that brings together the community action agencies in New York to network share success stories and challenges and strategize to meet the needs of vulnerable New Yorkers. When it comes to supporting people to move from poverty to self sufficiency, community action agencies know what works. In this episode, we'll be talking with two community action agency leaders who have been influential in transforming their agencies into trauma informed organizations. Please welcome Tina Zerbian, the CEO of Connecting Communities in Action, and Wendy Robards, Director of Culture and Workforce Development at Pro Action of Steuben and Yates. Welcome Wendy and Tina, please take a minute to introduce yourselves.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 01:20

Hi, Heidi. Hi, Wendy. I am Tina xRB. And I'm the CEO with Connecting Communities in Action. We serve Cattaraugus County, but we changed her name a few years back, because our services reach outside of the county as well. Glad to be here. Welcome.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 01:40

Hi, Tina. Hi, Heidi. I am Wendy Robards. And I'm the cultural and Workforce Development Director here at ProAction, which covers both seven and eight counties. And I've worked here for about 24 and a half years. And this is my first podcasts than happy to be here and passionate about this topic. Well, we're so happy that this is your first podcast. Thank you for doing this for us. We want to take some time today to talk about what it means to be a trauma informed agency. Can you explain to us a little bit about what that what that exactly means?

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 02:15

I think for me, acknowledging and understanding people's life experiences really helps us interact with them more effectively and deliver better care. So being trauma informed to me means that we assume that everyone that we meet, whether that's our customers, our partners, our employees or volunteers may have experienced trauma in their lives. And we begin to understand that things like culture and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, may lead to some chronic stressors, like social stigma and discrimination and oppression. And that can all increase folks psychological trauma. So trauma informed care, in my opinion, promotes healing and avoids retraumatization when we encounter folks.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 03:14

I think that's our great, you know, way to start us off, Tina, you know, I think for us with the four R's, you know, through SAMSA, that was kind of where we got grounded in our definition. So the realizing that individuals are more likely than not to have a history of trauma and all those things you've mentioned, you know, recognizing that knowing the trauma symptoms and signs of that, and acknowledging that the impact and role that trauma may play in individuals lives, including your own workforce, and we look at it from that lens. And then just responding through that. And as you said, resisting the retraumatization. You know, and I think for us, another way that we've explained it is that we stop asking what is wrong with this person and begin asking what has happened to this person, you know, or thinking about what is it that they've survived or gone through. And, you know, through our work with Sue and Sam at the Institute on trauma and trauma informed care, we understand that providing services in a trauma informed way means that we are aware and recognizing how we show up and how that affects people who have experienced trauma.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 04:21

I have two questions that came that came to mind with that. I'm wondering if you could tell me what four R's are because I'm not familiar with that phrase. And I was really struck by your comment about stop asking what's wrong with people? Can you just repeat those two sentences again?

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 04:43

Sure, the four R's. realizing their prevalence that individuals are more likely than not to have had had a history of trauma. And then the second one is recognizing the presence of trauma, and the signs and symptoms, responding by integrating our knowledge into trauma and light, and that can be related to policies, procedures and practices. And then lastly, resist re traumatizing. As far as the we stop asking what is wrong with this person? And I think I first heard that statement, it was a 60 minute segment with Oprah and Dr. Bruce Perry back in 2018, on the impacts of trauma and childhood. And, you know, that was the first time I think that I heard that, and that in that way, and, you know, really inspired us to, to really jump into this work. And, you know, even to expand on it with with the work through the Institute on trauma and trauma informed care. They describe it as a universal precaution. And so Tina, I see you shaking your head, so that that resonates. And, you know, which again, is assuming that most individuals have experienced that and US unintentionally or intentionally responding in ways to reduce that likelihood of doing more harm or re traumatizing.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 06:01

Thank you, Tina, recently, I heard you talk with our Emerging Leaders Institute, and you've shared your story of your leadership. And one of the things you talked about in that was how you came to be a

trauma informed care agency. And I'm wondering if you could share that part of your story. In terms of the movie that you saw, and what that led for you.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 06:26

I'm happy to I actually I give credit to Nisca, actually, because I attended the annual conference that was held in Albany in 2018, and watched the screening of the film resilience, the biology of stress and the science of hope and in how I was hooked. From that point forward, I think I immediately understood the role that community action can play in building resilient communities. And we actually ended up changing our mission statement to say that that's what we do. We build resilient communities as a result of having attended that particular annual conference and watching that film.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 07:13

So you watch that film, and then you went back to CCA and said,

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 07:21

so I think we did a lot of things right away, in its since 2008. Teen, it has been a progression. So we didn't do everything all at once. But the first things that we did, we had four employees who became involved in the trauma informed care champions program that is offered by the University of Buffalo's Institute on trauma and trauma informed care. They were part of a cohort that was established by a local school system. When I came back from Albany and started to organize what we now know as the TCAT, or the trauma informed Coalition for Cattaraugus. County, that school cohort joined us. And we ended up growing to over 100 individuals and 40 organizations. And we started offering training opportunities both in house for our employees and within our community. We built trauma informed care into our orientation and onboarding practices for our employees. We started using an assessment called the Arctic scale to gauge the readiness of our staff and board members. And also so that we can evaluate our change over time. And we established an internal champions team that was known as respond. And we brought UB Institute on trauma back for a deeper dive into what we call the 10 implementation domains, with our organization and with three other county departments that included social services, mental health and probation. So those were some of the things the highlights that we did right away. That's a lot of work to do. Right away. It was, but it has made a significant difference in our agency and I think for our customers and certainly within our community.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 09:27

Wendy, can you talk with us a little bit about how ProAction came to be a trauma informed care agency and what that process looked like for you.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 09:38

Sure at it, I think our journey really started in 2018 Around that time, when again, you know kind of mentioned the shift from what's wrong with you to what happened to you. And you know, I think for us just being excited about this becoming more mainstream, getting some traction and inspired a lot of light bulbs and a hot moments for us. And I think for many of us in this in this work, and we wanted to be a part of this culture shift and change, so it was really timely, because that was really essentially when we made that commitment as an organization to start this journey. And, you know, I think, for many of our programs, you know, we have had, we had learned about the ACEs study and trauma

informed approaches, with Judy Nordstrom back in 2006, through the top a Institute with our training, parenting education, certification, and implemented the practices for several years, but truly made that agency wide commitment. So a lot of the, you know, similar actions that Tina, referred to we had the resilience film at our all staff day, you know, essentially gained our commitment from our board of directors implemented that as part of our vision statement for this work, also became familiar with Sam says 10 domains, and really focused on five of those in 2018, and 2019. And we implemented a lot of positive changes out of similar to what that Tina had shared about new employee orientation, and, you know, the policy and procedure manual, and kind of looking at it from that lens, and then the pandemic hit in 2020. And no, I think for a lot of us, obviously, that pandemic required us to kind of shift our attention and priorities in March 2020, it did help us through that. And you know, really, I think fast forwarding a couple of years, we've really just reset our focus and began working directly with the Institute on trauma and trauma informed care. With Sue Greene and Samantha quarry at, you know, the University of Buffalo. And we had a smaller, trauma informed leadership team, we collaborated very closely with Sue and Sam, and really went through the pre implementation process and planning for all of those 10 key development areas. And after we did the pre implementation plan, we really just had to prioritize and focus on what key development areas we wanted to focus on. And since that time, our focus has really been around the leading and communicating and training our workforce. You know, in some of those actions and steps we've taken is our trauma informed leadership training, we had our culture Committee, which we're kind of defining as our trauma informed champions, and all of our supervisors completed the trauma informed leadership training. We had 40 supervisors that participated in the trauma informed supervision training, we really kind of went through our employee satisfaction with a trauma informed lens to ensure that we were really asking the right questions and linking to those five trauma informed guiding values and principles. And using that data to kind of help tailor and guide us in terms of the training and the next steps.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 12:54

Did you find did you both find that staff and community and board were eager and bored? Or did you find any resistance with this?

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 13:10

In our case, I think that a number of our employees were really hungry for something that would help them really relate to customers and see better success with customers. I think that we have a number of folks that are therapists that were already thinking about trauma informed approaches to their interactions. Some other folks were a little bit more resistant and didn't understand how maybe their roles dovetailed with trauma informed care, philosophies and practices. But I think the bottom line was that community action agencies for decades, have been focused on taking a strengths based approach with our customers, rather than focusing on what's wrong with customers. Family Development was strengths based. So coming back to our roots, and really understanding that identifying people's strengths and, you know, working to understand their trauma and not re traumatize them was a hook for most folks that that were engaged with us. And I also think that you can do some very visible, obvious changes that everybody really enjoys and takes pride in, like taking a look at our signage and taking a look at the way that our waiting room looks and our lighting and sort of that you know, the safety that people feel or don't feel when they walk into your buildings or waiting rooms and so making those kinds of changes I think made everybody feel better, knowing that At, they were proud of a place

that they could come to work every day. So some of the resistance and perhaps in a bit, I can tell you a story about working with our weatherization, folks, and the success that came out of those conversations, because I think that that was a disconnect at first, but we overcame that. Not everybody in the org in the community is 100%. On board. I think that there's still some resistance with some organizations, and we just continue to work on education and talking about the answer to what's in it for me, why would a business? Why would a corporation Why would a school want to implement trauma informed care? And I think that answering that question, what's in it for me, helps them come along in that process?

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 16:02

When did you do have a similar experience?

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 16:06

Yeah, I think so i The Hungry, really resonated, because I do think that we have a lot of staff, but being in community action agencies, you know, we have very diverse staff at all different levels of, of, you know, formal education around this lived experience and knowledge. So I think it's, again, kind of meeting people where they're at. And, you know, Tina, I'm glad you brought up the family development, because I think, you know, the shift of No, instead of what's wrong, you know, it's what happened, but also what's strong, you know, and getting, you know, my foundation here as it was within family development. And, you know, I think from a timing standpoint, again, with the pandemic, you know, kind of talking about the universal precaution, there was something that Sue and Sam really, it resonated is, you know, even understanding that, you know, while we aren't providing trauma specific services, you know, or therapy, we have the opportunity to neutralize our work environment and our service environments, and where we show up. And now having gone through the pandemic, and really rolling this out, you know, in 2020, to thinking about the universal precautions of putting the mask or gloves on, you know, just in case, you know, versus a walking around and asking people if they had COVID. So similarly, with this, you know, that really resonated, because the trauma informed approach is us all putting on our metaphorical PPE, you know, our masks and our gloves, and really being intentional with the way we respond. And part of kind of how we bring the workforce along is just having conversations around the find five, trauma informed guiding values and principles, and helping them really see how they're already doing a lot of this work, and how you know, and then really exploring what else is possible, and what could we do differently, so that they take that pride and they take, you know, that, that wanting more and to learn more. And I really feel like so much of this is understanding ourselves. And yes, serving our customers and families, and also how we show up with each other in our work. And another thing, I think that was timely for us as an organization as we rolled out our agency values in June of 2021. And really being able to utilize that same framework and process and approach with how we operationalize our values and continue to do so we use a very similar framework that worked and build on that success as we were implementing the trauma informed work, and really just getting that, that shift in that lens, you know, for them to see that how they show up can have, you know, a lot of times being that only support person for the staff, and being able to, you know, show up in that way for them.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 18:54

When do you if I may, I'd love to comment on that. We had a very similar experience, we redesigned our our mission, our vision and our values to align with those trauma informed care principles. So now our our values are safety and trust, professionalism, empowerment, and choice, continuous improvement partnerships and collaboration and belonging, which is very reflective of the trauma informed care principles. And we use those new value statements to create an employee proposition statement. So now our hook for new employees is being able to put your values in action. And I think as a result of that two years in a row, we've been voted a best workplace by the Buffalo News. So it has really impacted our staff in terms of their feeling of, of belonging, their feeling of purpose, and creating a workplace that is really gives room and space. For people to do their best.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 20:03

That is really saying something that you were given that award two years in a row.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 20:10

We're very proud of it. We it's I don't know if you know how that works, but the Buffalo News does a, an anonymous survey with employees, various organizations, and they determine whether or not you, you meet the criteria to become a best workplace. So we're, we're quite proud of that. And I believe that that's a result of aligning these values with trauma informed care principles.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 20:40

I love that. Thank you, Tina, for sharing that and congratulations. And I, you know, I think that's inspiring. And I think that we're in that place right now, we actually created a crosswalk activity, and knowing and living ROI, where we connected our agency values and behaviors to the trauma informed guiding values and principles. And we just did that activity with our culture committee, and hope to kind of expand that through the agency discussions as part of our next steps. And, you know, again, looking at the behaviors, how we're showing up and really being intentional in all aspects of our work, but that so it's kind of, you know, there's a lot of interconnectedness with all of that, as you as you alluded to. Well, and I think that our organizations have probably shared a lot of these ideas along the way and have learned from one another. And it's been great to have a sibling organization that is on the same path. And I think that, you know, we can we can do that across the state?

21:43

Absolutely.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 21:45

Sometimes, when agencies talking about trauma informed care, you know, it, it touches on all aspects of the agency, right, physical, emotional, all of those. And often I hear people reference signage. And think for those of us not involved in trauma informed care, we always, I always have to stop and think, what would that look like? So can you tell us a little bit about what that looked like for you?

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 22:16

Well, I'm almost a little embarrassed to tell you the story. But when we began to really take an objective view of what would it feel like to walk into any of our buildings as a customer? Or as a community member? What would that feel like? And we were noticing things like signs that said, No smoking,

right? Stop, put your cigarette out, and, you know, no gathering on the patio. So lots of negatives, lots of nose, stops it that was not in any way welcoming to folks. So we really had to put on a different pair of glasses to see that these through a different lens and completely eliminated those, those signs. You know, even some of we have some residential facilities where we have house rules, and myths, so many of our house rules were written in the negative, don't do this, don't do that. And just reworking those policies, rules, approaches in a way that could be more positive and affirming to folks was a huge change.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 23:44

Did you find similar? Wendy?

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 23:47

Yeah, that was funny. Thanks, Tina. That's the reality of this and just kind of shifting the lines. And again, I think in alignment with our, our agency values and behaviors, and the creating that sense of belonging, you know, as part of our values and representation, you know, seeing and valuing the whole person and providing the resources. So when they're coming in for even, maybe not signage, but coming in to do our paperwork form and knowing that we have multiple programs that they could potentially be accessing, that they're not being asked to fill out multiple intake forms, and repeatedly getting asked the same questions, because that's also a way that we can be rearming and having them retell their story. So I think similarly, yeah, the absolutes, you know, I think just kind of scanning through our, you know, employee manual with the trauma informed lens and looking at those shoulds and woods, you know, that the nevers and always and the language, you know, and, and kind of really just being intentional about that. So similar in terms of that, that lens and approach and, you know, not just in our main offices, but I think just expanding that to all of our, you know, our school and family resource centers and our different sites and really haven't ever Buddy kind of be a part of that. And through our pre implementation, we went through an emotional and physical safety checklist with the trauma informed leadership team. And, you know, as part of our next key development areas as we work into them, that will be something that will certainly bring in, you know, customers and families and additional staff, so I have their perspective and their lens as well. But yeah, we made a lot of building improvements, you know, and take rooms, some outside, you know, exterior improvements, some of those things, we had to kind of scale back during the pandemic, you know, to, to make sure that we are ensuring safety, so we're kind of slowly bringing them forward. And, you know, and that, in itself has brought some a different perspective, you know, looking at it now, in hindsight,

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 25:45

what have you learned so far?

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 25:48

So much? Question. Yeah, I mean, it's a game changer, you know, I think it's important to our culture, and developing a trauma informed culture, it's an ongoing process. It's a journey. And the biggest thing I, you know, I think learning is there's no completion date, in our evolving and we've, we have a very dedicated staff, you know, I think, in this work that helps, you know, for me to be able to help lead the work having our trauma informed champion team, I think that's something learning that we, this is a team effort, and, and really, it takes all of us. And one of the things that I recall, too, and Samantha

sharing during the training that really stood out to me, related to our workforce is it's hard to give what we don't receive. And so the learning for us was really upfront, it's essential for our supervisors, our managers, and our leadership, to really understand and model this, you know, so that our staff can show up for the families and customers and each other, as we, you know, move through the world in this work in a trauma informed way. And, you know, that's essentially why we really learned very early on that we wanted to prioritize the training our workforce. And, you know, as Tina said early on, that the workforce is hungry, I think they want to learn more. And that was, that was really inspiring. They're open to understanding trauma, and the impacts and all aspects of the work. And, you know, for us taking that value in their time, and making sure that we understand that we really need to be intentional and thoughtful with our approach, that we have a demonstrated ongoing commitment from, you know, the board and administration. And probably the biggest learning and advice, even for others is, you know, the wisdom from Sue and Samantha was that we really took the heart. Because this is a lot, there's a lot of information, there's a lot of moving parts and shifting, and we're getting additional information every day, even, you know, within your science. And so really just planning the work, work, and not having false starts. And one of the things she said, because if you know, Maura, you know, she's a driver, right, and, you know, and kind of like keeping things and so just really us all kind of creating that space for each other. And knowing that a slow pace is better than not doing anything, you know, so we are taking a slow, there are times that I wish that we really could, you know, be further along. And at the same time, we, you know, we have the competing priorities of the day to day for staff. And we really want to have this be perceived as you know, not another demand or another to do list. But really rather a way that we show up, just like our agency values and our behaviors and continue to learn and evolve as we implement the key development areas over time.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 28:45

When do you you really have expressed a lot of our same learning takeaways as being a part of a trauma informed organization? I think we've we've learned that trauma can be an individual experience, or it can be a cultural experience too. And, you know, we're working with people who have experienced poverty and, you know, indigenous displacement in our community and so on. We've learned that really, anybody can benefit from being aware of trauma or being trauma informed or trauma sensitive. And that could be you know, the mom and pop grocery store or the you know, the knife company that that has 400 employees down the road. Because being trauma informed also helps to reduce absenteeism and increase people's profits. Believe it or not. We've learned that trauma informed care is a process. It is not a one time information dump. It's not just bringing folks in for training once a year. It's not a certificate program. gram, right? It is a process. And I think that we've also learned that we need lots more resources, and funders to understand and address trauma, to create resiliency for our community. And whether that's legislators, you know, New York State funders, local funders, I think they're beginning to pay attention. But that's definitely something that we've learned is critical if we want to continue this work.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 30:31

And if both mentioned near science, that is not something that everyone is familiar with, can you talk a little bit about that and how it plays into being a trauma informed care organization.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 30:46

Thank you to Niska, again, for having the foresight, again, during the pandemic, to create a cohort of trainers who worked with Dr. Rob Anda, and Laura Porter, I believe we now have 20 ish trainers across New York State that are associated with Community Action organizations. And they present training in their organizations and in their communities around near science, near stands for neurobiology, epigenetics, adverse childhood experiences, and resilience. So it's a specific curriculum that thanks to the Department of State and Niska, we have the capacity to deliver across the state now. Thank you for explaining that

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 31:42
out as an agency start this process.

31:47
Yeah.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 31:50

You know, I, first off, I think people shouldn't be intimidated by the terminology. Or, you know, the need to address these kind of elusive implementation domains all at once. I think we should be proud that as I mentioned before, that community action has for decades really embraced Family Development and as use that strengths based model of care. So the foundation is really already there. I think you don't have to serve victims or survivors, you don't have to have therapists to be serving a traumatized population. And I believe that poverty and systemic racism in themselves are trauma inducing. So I think start by giving thought to things like your space and your, your processes that might trigger trauma in your customers, or anyone, your employees or others who enter the building, create a workspace where trust and safety really allow both employees and customers to feel seen and feel heard. So I don't think it's rocket science, you can weave this work into what you're already doing as a community action agency.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 33:06

While sad, and I think, you know, for community action agencies being you know, very mission driven, and a lot of our our mission statements involving supporting individuals and families as they build resilience, overcoming adversity and prosper, you know, just understanding that a lot of the families and individuals that we work with, are living in the crisis of poverty, which we know creates the adverse experiences that lead to trauma. So really, you know, this isn't necessary, I think, in, as Tina said, integrating as part of a culture and weaving it in getting that established a commitment early on from your board of directors, you know, your admin and leadership and your management team. You know, and of course, the allocating time and resources and funding. And, you know, for us, it was really beneficial, working with the experts to learn and complete the pre implementation model. Because I think otherwise it can be, you know, there's a lot of different sources of information. And it really just kind of helped us get grounded and anchored in the work, understanding from the, you know, the foundational five trauma informed guiding values and principles. And really, just like Tina said, like learning from each other, clearly, there's been a partnership and learning from each other, you know, so just continuing to create that space and curiosity, you know, asking questions, learning from others listening to feedback, including from our staff, and really, you know, bringing them along.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 34:36

We've talked about some of the benefits, but are there are there other benefits that we haven't talked about yet?

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 34:44

I think in our case, because we've woven trauma informed care principles into our values and into our employee value proposition and into the way that we just the way that we treat people on a daily basis. It has definitely impacted our ability to recruit and retain employees. I think that if you ask folks who work here, most of them will tell you that your organization has changed for the better as a result of our focus on trauma and for unformed care practices, and that we have become just more employee focused, person focused organization that tends to listen a little bit more and support people where they are. I think that people really feel as though their opinions matter. They do feel seen and heard. And so it just makes for a much better workplace. People enjoy coming to work here every day. And I think that our customers would tell you the same thing. We recently had a visit with an elected official. And he asked that we bring in customers who have experienced successes. So we brought in folks from our domestic violence shelter, we brought in dads from our Fatherhood Program, folks who had been previously homeless. And, you know, they didn't talk about a specific program that helped them, they did not talk about a specific process that they worked through what they talked about, was feeling seen and feeling heard, that made a huge difference for them. That's nice to hear.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 36:43

You mentioned that oh, sorry. No, go ahead. I think that very much resonates, you know, kind of just again, aligning with our agency values, and, you know, incorporating our employee value proposition statement, to reflect our values, and the feedback from staff. So absolutely, it's how we show up, you know, about the behaviors, how we demonstrate it on a daily basis, and creating that culture, you know, and certainly, you know, moving the needle on that, and creating that safe space for our employees, if they're feeling, you know, like Tina said, heard and valued and seen and seeing them being connected to this work and understanding it more, is only going to make us stronger as an organization. You know, and also expanding this to the other providers and agencies, you know, so I think understanding sometimes, you know, that we're doing that, until we have everybody kind of connected with this word, they could be coming from an organization, you know, that they just experienced that, and then, you know, so it's really a, it's definitely going to take some collaboration with that in it, and it doesn't, it doesn't have to be like Tina said rocket science, I think, just really being able to work with Sue and Samantha to help us connect to our and build on our existing frameworks, that's really helped us see the value in that and using that to implement this work. And really promoting it, as you know, promoting it versus announcing it was one of the things that they said, so truly seeing the value of the work, how we show up the lenses we use, you know, the behaviors we demonstrate, and, you know, really looking at it as a way that we can positively impact you know, both our workforce and our families and customers that we serve. And that really always been front and center for us.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 38:34

I know that Wendy has a couple of times mentioned Samantha and Sue from the University of Buffalo, the Institute on trauma and trauma informed care. If you go to their website, there actually is an organizational change manual that is available free of charge, you can request that it will be sent to you

there's no cost. So you can begin to work through that on your own actually, I mean, we have used obviously, like ProAction, we have used suon, Sam to come in and actually do one on one or large group, we've had them do the the trauma informed supervision work with us as well. But you don't have to start there. You can start with just looking at the organizational change manual.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 39:20

That's a great resource. Thank you. Tina, you mentioned earlier a success story. And I'm wondering if you can share that with us. And I would love to so this is a story

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 39:34

about really helping all of our departments in a very diverse organization. I'm sure like, all the community action agencies, you know, have lots of different kinds of services, lots of different expertise among your employee population. So but helping them really understand that they all play a role in trauma informed cares our energy and Housing Department was really, I think, struggling to understand how they fit this trauma informed care model because they saw themselves initially as not as caseworkers, or therapists, counselors, but as serving units instead of people. So we spent some time taking a look at their customer satisfaction surveys. And the vast majority of those surveys, our customers reported that their residents in those units being served, they really loved the fact that they were being treated by our crews with such respect and dignity. And that came through over and over and over again, in those satisfaction surveys. It was very clear that our crews made them feel safe with, you know, strangers in their home. And they came to trust our employees. They felt like we listened to their concerns when we walked in the door. So organically, trauma informed practices were already happening every time our weatherization crew walked in somebody's home. And so we spent some time just talking with the department staff about how they treat people so kindly. And they had this, you know, this aha moment about their role in a trauma informed organization. And I believe that if you ask them now, they would tell you that they really fully embrace the concept.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 41:43

Thank you for sharing that. That is great. Wendy, do you have a success story that you would like to share? That was beautiful. Thank you, Tina, for sharing that. You know, I think we've had some similar in more recently, as part of our next steps with the trauma informed guiding values and principles, we actually had all of our departments across the organization, engage in conversations at the team level each month at team meetings, to really truly kind of connect again, their role, what are they already doing to really recognize those, those things that they're already embodying and demonstrating. And then also, just to kind of plant that seed to think about, you know, more intentional ways we can show up better or do something differently. And I was actually part of the senior nutrition and our energy weatherization crew and these conversations, and I think just again, giving them that space, to have them have the same opportunity, and for them to really connect that with their role. So I think that that is definitely reinforces the work and the investment in this, and it does take all of us, you know, but I think from an overarching the success for us is just really not overthinking it and using what's already worked for us being able to connect it to the work using similar, you know, the values discussions we did as an organization, we went through that we've done over 160 values, discussions, where all of our team departments engaged in conversations specific to our agency values. So we use that similar framework and did the same thing at the team and department level with the trauma informed guiding values and

principles and bringing new hires along, so that even though they're starting now, and they've maybe didn't take part in those conversations, that they'll have that same opportunity moving forward. It may look different, but they'll have that same opportunity. So just really building on the successes, and it's just, you know, it's very energizing, and but the investment in the appreciation and the gratitude that I have that, you know, I work in an organization. You know, I think, and I think that a lot of our employee and workforce, you know, relate to that as well.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 43:53

Thanks, Wendy. You mentioned resources, the film Tina, that kind of got this started for you. And Wendy, you mentioned that and you've mentioned UB. So we're going to put links to both of those in the description of the podcast. Are there? Is there a place that you recommend people go to get some resources and start to learn more?

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 44:19

Certainly the UB trauma informed care website. There is a New York State does have a trauma informed care network now. And I can also provide that link for you, Heidi. Thank you. SAMSA has a lot of really great resources on trauma informed care, and implementation.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 44:43

Wendy, I'm sure you have more. I've already learned so much from you today, Wendy of things that I want to do now. Yeah, definitely the ones that you mentioned. You know, I think one of the things that we've also done in really where we started with our agency values as they work around there to lead book clubs, but Brene Brown, and that's something Laura and I have actually facilitated, I think seven groups now. So we have 80 or 85 staff that have gone through that all different levels. But there are a lot of books and podcasts and resources around trauma or like I said, I think there's just so much more evolving, and people are really, you know, and I think whenever Oprah does something, there's kind of that global movement behind her and a lot of passion and understanding. So there definitely are a lot of resources. I know care compass is another one that hasn't, you know, invested some work around this. You know, we have our annual resilience symposiums, we actually learned about Dr. Tony Romo from Tina. And he came last year, and we're actually bringing him back later this month at our at our resilience symposium that we're holding, at the end of May. So I think there's definitely not a shortage of resources, for sure on this topic.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 45:57

We're gonna get ready to wrap up in a couple minutes. But before we do, do either of you have any parting thoughts that you would like to share with us?

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 46:06

Sure, I think that as much work as we do within our own organizations, it's also really critical that we bring in collaborative partners into this process in our communities. You know, really, it's about creating a resilient community. Because even though we might allow for people being seen and being heard that you know that that doesn't happen everywhere. So I think that it's really important that we spread this word to others, I think we've been successful in bringing in, for example, folks who are nursing students, or people who are learning how to be physician's assistants, we're working with St.

Bonaventure University, Niagara University, and others who are in the health care business. And I think that that's really critically important. It's whether it's schools, whether it's social services, your local legislators, I think that your community is far better off, if you can have these conversations with all of your partners and community members, not just within your own own own organizations.

Wendy Robards, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates 47:18

I would agree with that I, you know, I think the the community lens, really kind of building on what we're doing, and using those opportunities, I think, I'm glad you mentioned schools, because we have some schools that are coming in to our resilience symposium, but we've also kind of expanded some of our staff development opportunities and training, you know, for our workforce to include our community partners, you know, from poverty, one on one, we, you know, we talked about in your science, we do adult and youth mental health, first aid, Enough Abuse, we continue to offer the resilience film screenings and discussions at least two times a year. We do our poverty simulations once a year, and like I talked about our annual resilience symposium. So I think just really building on a lot of that, and again, kind of implementing it and integrating it in what we're doing. And I think that creates that curiosity. You know, I had calls yesterday from a smaller department of social services that heard they want to be more trauma informed, and they heard about Dr. Toma and they're going to come to the resilience symposium. So I think if we just continue to show up, and you know, I think, again, even if it's a slow process, as long as we're doing something, don't get stuck, you know, jump in with two feet. And, you know, there are a lot of wonderful resources and people that are doing this work, that we can learn from each other.

Heidi Barcomb, NYSCAA 48:42

You know, and Wendy, thank you so much for joining us on Lights, Camera Community Action and sharing your information and your knowledge about trauma informed care, and how to become a trauma informed care agency. We really appreciate your time with us. And thank you again.

Tina Zerbian, Connecting Communities in Action 49:00

Thank you for having us. Thank you.