Secretary Eric Friedlander:
We'd been working a year and a half together, almost daily, and had a staff meeting and you stood up and said, "I have never been able to shake your hand." That was really emotional.

Susan Dunlap:
It was.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah.

Julianne Hatton:
Welcome to CHFS Community, a place where ordinary people do extraordinary work helping Kentuckians reach their full human potential. Hosted by Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Cabinet for Help and Family Services.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Hello, CHFS. This is your secretary, Eric Friedlander, and today I have with me Susan Dunlap who's the executive director of our Office of Public Affairs. Hi, Susan.

Susan Dunlap:
Good afternoon.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Good to see you as always.

Susan Dunlap:
Good to see you and good to hear you.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah, true enough, true enough. So, where were you born? Where'd you grow up?

Susan Dunlap:
I was born in Tennessee but only lived there for about four months and moved to Indiana, stayed there for many, many years. But my grandparents were back in Tennessee so we would
have to cut through Kentucky, of course, to visit them. And we had the family station wagon, the windows would get fogged up and I'd use my forearm to clear the glass. And when we went through Kentucky, I would look out of the window and I always said I am going to live here someday and that actually came to pass when I took a job in Lexington in the '90s. A couple times, I stepped away for career reasons to North Carolina and to Florida and now I'm back and don't see going anywhere else.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
So, you cleared off the window and said I'm going to live here, it wasn't that this station wagon broke down and you were stuck, right?

Susan Dunlap:
No, not at all.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
All right. So, you grew up in Indiana?

Susan Dunlap:
I did.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And you got to know some pretty prominent folks in Indiana as well in terms of what your career was there and your high school experiences. Talk a little about that.

Susan Dunlap:
Yeah. Well, I went to an elementary school that was designed by the architect I.M. Pei in Columbus, Indiana. So, I just had this false sense of every community just invests in the arts and the humanities and every kid has a school like this with a natatorium and an astronomy lab and three different kinds of foreign languages that you can take for eight years and then I moved to Corydon in very, very southern Indiana. But yes, when I was in Columbus, one of my scout troop comrades brother was Mike Pence so I was able to go to their house back then.

And in Corydon, my first job was as the janitor of the local newspaper office and it was owned by a political family at the time, Bob O'Bannon and his son, Frank O’Bannon, was on the board. And so, technically, I have now worked for two Democratic governors in two different states because I became a newspaper writer for O'Bannon Publishing and did that for about 18 years. And being in that setting of being the janitor, it was really good because I had the flexible schedule and I had money for yearbooks and popcorn and that kind of thing that you do in high school but I saw all the news pasted up on the paste-up pages and I would just pause against the push room and read that and contemplate that and Lee Hamilton was doing columns regularly every week.

So, it definitely shaped my political leanings to have been around all that and it was just such an invaluable experience and it gave me some discipline that some who are on the receiving end
of it might say is a little bit difficult at times but it made me very exacting in terms of being a writer and an editor and I think it's come back to serve me well though for the right reasons.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
So, sometimes people refer to newspapers as fish wrap and things like that but you were actually working on cleaning up the newspaper, right?

Susan Dunlap:
I was. And even though it was a weekly, it won so many national and state awards and so the bar was pretty high. And so, it was just a fantastic introduction into the working world and it's just come back to serve me so many times throughout my career.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Is that what got you interested in public relations and media?

Susan Dunlap:
I'd say so. I was at that juncture where you pick a major and I almost went into social work, interestingly, but I stayed with the journalism and communications. After I left the media field, I went into corporate and my first big corporate job was at Lexmark over in Lexington and got to do some international travel when I was with them. And I've been with three MCOs and two state regional hospital systems and also a nonprofit and that's where I met Kurt Vonnegut.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Kurt Vonnegut, yeah.

Susan Dunlap:
He was an artist in residence when I was on staff at Mount St. Francis over in ... Just outside of New Albany, if you know where that is.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
I know where it is.

Susan Dunlap:
Yeah.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
It's a lovely little campus so that's really nice.

Susan Dunlap:
Yes, yeah.
Secretary Eric Friedlander:
That's really nice. So, you met Kurt Vonnegut.

Susan Dunlap:
I did.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Gave you some advice, right?

Susan Dunlap:
He did but he was more about listening than talking. He was a very modest and sharing kind of person and he didn't mind being surrounded and asked questions and he was very giving with that advice. And that was not always the case with some of the artists that I met that came into residence.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Right. I'm sure, I'm sure. So, you got into communications. Once you graduated high school, you decided you loved communications and you stayed in that field?

Susan Dunlap:
I did. So, my undergrad is from Indiana, I went to grad school at Seton Hall and stayed with communications and I started down the path for a terminal degree at UK in the College of Public Health. So, to have found myself in this current role in state government and not knowing what was going to happen with the pandemic, that all this would come in so handy and that I would have this understanding of this stuff that I would've never, in a million years, dream that I would have that practical use for and look what happened.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Exactly, and we are the happier for it. You actually worked for a former cabinet secretary for a little bit.

Susan Dunlap:
I did. When I was in Tampa, I was with Audrey Tayse Haynes and her office was 10 feet away from mine and Colleen Hagan.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Who was the legislative person for the cabinet. You also worked at the Kentucky Co-op, too.

Susan Dunlap:
I did with Janie Miller, yes, another former cabinet secretary.
Secretary Eric Friedlander:
So, not only former governors but, more importantly, former cabinet secretaries, at least in my mind.

Susan Dunlap:
Indeed.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And so, we were drowning here at the cabinet, COVID had started and then I felt very, very fortunate and I felt fortunate all the way through my time here at the cabinet that the right people showed up at exactly the right time and you were one of the folks I put in that category.

Susan Dunlap:
Thank you.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Well, you called and said you were interested and I'm like, "OK," and I think you were shocked. You wanted to come in for an interview, right?

Susan Dunlap:
Oh, I completely remember how all this happened. So, we did have a phone conversation, you were so busy, you were not able to call me until a Saturday, which was very telling, but I also understood it and we had that conversation. Now, this is how the environment was at that time. I got my New York Times and my Washington Post and I was reading that stuff every day and you remember how they had those models for how long the pandemic would last if people followed certain instructions and adopted certain behaviors and embraced science. And so, that curve was much shorter if people were compliant and if you sheltered in place and did these certain things.

So, I was pretty lonely because I was following everything that was being said but hopeful that this could be a shorter duration. And it's not a good thing to be 700 miles from family, sheltering in place in your own pod and thinking about these things. So, when you called me and I had this opportunity to come back and be around my children, all three of whom live in Kentucky and my parents in Southern Indiana and siblings here, I could not have been happier and I thought, "Well, do you want me to hop on a flight and come on up and we meet over coffee? Do you want to at least meet me in person?" But you said, "If you want to do this, come on up and we'll get this process started with the background check and all the kinds of things that are attached to the hiring process," and I was dumbfounded.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah. I think I said welcome to the Titanic at that point but I also knew folks that you had worked for who recommended you and so that was all I needed.
Susan Dunlap:
Well, I appreciate that leap of faith and I appreciate them for whatever they said.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah. Well, I think we both leapt in faith.

Susan Dunlap:
And it was the Titanic.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And it was amazing. It has been a wild, wild ride.

Susan Dunlap:
It has. And my earliest memories of those days ... Well, first of all, you and I couldn't shake hands and that's what you always do when you meet somebody for the first time and that didn't happen. And I think, that first week, Dr. Brenzel was at your conference table and there was an ink pen on the table and I'd used it for something and he was unwilling to pick it up because we didn't know what we didn't know. And you had people streaming in your office from National Guard with the military uniforms on and I had a green string of lights because we were lighting up things green and I had a bell on my desk and joined in the ringing every morning at 10:00.

And I still remember you watching from your office and I was in mine the day of the flyover when the governor asked for about three weeks after the declaration of the pandemic to bolster and have everybody rally around this thing and be in it together. I thought, "Surely this is not going to go on much longer," and we know how that turned out.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
We do. I had a friend of mine who's in the restaurant business, he said, "Well, so, close, things are going to close, this is a week or so," and I'm like, "Oh, no, no, no, it's going to be longer than that, more like five." Shows how much we knew at the time.

Susan Dunlap:
Exactly. Oh, and Juli was coming in your office every morning and sanitizing doorknobs and your phone and all that. That's the stuff that I remember.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Me too. Although I keep on trying to forget, I think. I was listening to something on the radio the other day and it was a discussion about how, in some ways, we are trying to forget that time and it feels so misty at this point. I don't know if you experienced that as well.
Susan Dunlap:
I definitely do. And just the things that have changed up, the cooking at home and streaming the shows and when you were able to borrow the Actors Theater, Dracula cape because they couldn't do their production.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Right.

Susan Dunlap:
They could only do a radio or a podcast thing for Dracula which is a cyclical, seasonal thing for them. And just parts of us, we do want to forget it because it wasn't necessarily a fun time but there were things, I think, were worth latching onto and keeping also.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah. Well, Dr. Stack still thanks me for taking that on because he didn't want to be Stacula, although I think that's brilliant. But it's good. I saw that just recently because it's starting to come up in my Facebook memory so it was fun to see that. I think I was really quite silly then. I might still be. As you think about some of that, we've come a long way from those daily press conferences and, on the weekends, at those press conferences. It, again, just feels so like it's a different world.

Susan Dunlap:
It is and my notion of the cabinet and the portfolio of everything that's in this cabinet knew it at a very high level. But when I got here and saw what all was in it, I thought, "Oh, Michelle P. Waiver, what is that? Or what's Title XIX and Medicaid and what's Hart Supported Living?" And there was literally no time to pull off what we were asked to help support and get to know that and I kept thinking, "I'm surely going to be able to come up for air and this is going to change and I can understand this and process it and figure out how to help and stop feeling like I was giving other parts of the cabinet short shrift," and it just took the longest time to be able to come up and out of that.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Oh, well, you talked about being able to shake hands. We were in a year and a half, we'd been working a year and a half together, almost daily, and had a staff meeting and you stood up and said, "I have never been able to shake your hand." That was really emotional.

Susan Dunlap:
It was.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah.
Susan Dunlap:
And I'd never met Ivy Alexander until that day and other people in that room. And the first time I spoke with Dr. Stack on the phone, he said, "Well, maybe someday we'll get to meet in person," which turned out to be laughable because look how many hundreds of times he's had to see my face at a press conference or whatever but it was like that.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
You get together in person and it's after zooming for so long, I remember, and it was like, "Oh, wait, how tall are you?" Like Brice who's very, very, very tall and some other folks who were perhaps not as statuesque. So, it's always a little bit of a shock because we're all the same height on Zoom but it was a very different experience.

Susan Dunlap:
Yes, it was.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And now, we're still adjusting to how are we acting now and reacting now and it brings its own sets of challenges because it's still a big cabinet.

Susan Dunlap:
Yes, it is. It's a lot to wrap my mind around. In fact, I did a search not too long ago about companies in Kentucky by their value, rank by value. So, it's the marquee names, the Yum! Brands and Humana and whatnot. And the size of this cabinet and the budget that we manage around exceeds, I think, all but maybe one.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah.

Susan Dunlap:
Now, that's something to think about that really puts it into perspective. So, the size of the cabinet and the number of the employees is one thing but just what that does and the impact on the economy, it's pretty staggering if you let yourself think about it and dwell on it.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah, I try not to. But it's true. The impact that we have on a day-to-day basis is so profound for Kentuckians and such an important and vital responsibility that we all have together. And that's something that, I think, should unite us as we try to make people's lives better in Kentucky.

Susan Dunlap:
I agree. And I think one of the strongest outputs of this cabinet are those legislative fact sheets. Not only the broad brush stroke that's the statewide one but, if you drill down by the counties, Jiji's group, what they produce and get refreshed a couple times a year. And if people would
take those and really study them and think about what that means for their county and put that in perspective of the population, it's the people that they're seeing at Bill's On The Hill IGA in Hancock County, it's a huge deal.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And those folks listening, you can go and find those fact sheets. You get to the secretary's page and you look at public affairs and we have everything listed by county, the impact of Medicaid and SNAP and childcare and what that means to an individual county in terms of economic impact. So, I encourage you all to look, look up at your own county and I think you'll be impressed at what we do and what we do for your community and that's a way that we try to measure it.

Susan Dunlap:
Yes. So, I would encourage people to look at those fact sheets, of course, but then go to the agency and at that agency level and then you start looking at reports like the prevalence of diabetes by county or certain types of cancer or get information about the WIC program and think about, when you go into a grocery store and you see something as WIC eligible, and if you ask yourself, if I bought that and filled my cart with only that, what would public health say about that and how balanced that is as opposed to what an EBT card will allow you to buy. And it becomes a very interesting set of questions to ponder from a policy perspective.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Absolutely.

Susan Dunlap:
And that's just one of the things that really helps me stay jazzed about this job. Every direction that you turn around this cabinet, there's something that deep that you can think about, get the facts, figure out where you sit with it and then become conversant about it. And there's some real power in the ability to be conversant about that and to speak about this cabinet and its contributions and what it can and what it does for Kentuckians.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Oh, absolutely. Well, and being able to use your voice. I've talked about this a lot which is like the social workers who were able to advocate, not only for themselves, but for family support workers and then it turned out it was advocating for all of state government. So, when we educate ourselves and we learn to use our voices, which is a part of resilience, it makes a difference and it can make a difference way beyond ourselves. And I think that's one of the exciting things about being here and learning what is important to the work that we do.

Susan Dunlap:
I agree. And we're of about the same vintage and you probably remember the Sally Field movie, I don't know, maybe it was released in the early '80. Norma Rae?
Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Susan Dunlap:
She's the labor leader?

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Susan Dunlap:
And so, what we see now in some organized labor movements and to be able to think about that and what that means for Kentucky but to also, within this cabinet, of using your voice and how we can effectively do that to advocate for ourselves. It's a lot to absorb and there's opportunity there in absorbing it and taking that and doing something with it.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
So, talk a little about what that means. You are head of the Office of Public Affairs, how does that fit into the conversation we're just having?

Susan Dunlap:
Well, first of all, people have a different notion of what's meant by public affairs and some people will confuse that with what the Office of the Ombudsman does, one-on-one constituent type of responses and that's not what we are. Think mass communications, think media relations, crisis communications response, education and outreach, community engagement, that's what I think of when I say public affairs. And I see that as the ability to take this information, process it, know what it means to you, know where you sit on an issue and be able to have the conversations that help support what the cabinet's doing and what the agencies and the branches that are all a part of this is doing to help Kentuckians.

And so, that can be, should be, multiple audiences, it can be a daily conversation without wearing it out, without people becoming tired of hearing about it because you can literally pick a different topic every day and maybe only revisit that four times a year before you would start all over. That is how big this cabinet is.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Right. And the importance of the internal communication like this and are the newsletters and we already referenced the Dracula videos but coordinating what that internal communication is so that we can have a coherent message.

Susan Dunlap:
Exactly. And the staff engagement and the understanding of what we're doing and why we're doing it, how we're doing it, how soon we're doing it is all a part of that internal communications outreach. And I would argue that our newsletter, our podcast series, the town
halls that we have, the departmental meetings, the more structured meetings like Rashad was helping with that Miriam is leading now, all that is contributing to a very strong internal communications presence.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
You had a strong, strong background in internal communications as well.

Susan Dunlap:
I did.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Because that's part of what your corporate work was, am I right?

Susan Dunlap:
It sure was.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And so, you bring that experience to us here which I think is so important because I don't think we paid as much attention to it as we should have.

Susan Dunlap:
Well, and that's been more of a newcomer in the corporate communications field, almost like an afterthought. But if you leave your employees or your staff members out of it, you're overlooking a big opportunity there and I suppose I had the best glimpse of that, well, certainly when I was at Lexmark but I was at Humana when they stood up Medicare Part D which introduced those eligible for Medicare to prescription drug benefits for the first time in US history.

So, to be part of the team that helped get that in place for those Americans who were digging in their own pocket to pay for prescription drugs at the time but it was such a change that leadership understood that, "Hey, you work at Humana, I have this question about this Part D thing, can you help me?" and it wouldn't matter if you were the janitor or worked in the mail room or you were on the legal team and not even in the Medicare part of the business. People thought, just by virtue of you working there, you must know everything.

So, they saw that as an opportunity to give foundational fundamental information to employees so that, if they're asked, saying, "You know what? I do such and such by day but here's a number that you could call and they will help you out and they'll answer the phone in less than 20 seconds or whatever it was." And so, that really showed me what that power is if people just know, even if you don't know the answer, if you know immediately where to send someone to, it's really helpful. And then just to build communications campaign around that whole thing but just starting at least with that.
Secretary Eric Friedlander:
And we oftentimes start new programs here and have in the past several years so I think learning from there is probably a valuable lesson for you in terms of how we do communication here.

Susan Dunlap:
Oh, absolutely, yes. Have borrowed from that a few times.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
So, what are some other things you learned about, tips that you have on communication that you might be able to share with us?

Susan Dunlap:
Oh, wow. Well, the one thing that's in all the textbooks in college, it's tell them, tell them, tell them again. And as a journalist, that's a terrible idea because you read it once, you're asking me to read it again or hear it again and then one more time to put a bow on it. And I understand it and I understand the value in repeating a message and that message consistency but it's not as engaging as if people just talk. And I went to something that a Kentucky Book Fair sponsored a few years back and they had a New York Times reporter who's the guest speaker who would also ... Rick Bragg from Alabama who'd written several books and he said, "I don't get up and give speeches, I just talk." So, he had this very deep south Alabama accent and he was talking about his mother's cooking and the biscuits and all that kind of thing and he never repeated anything and everyone was at the edge of their seat waiting on what he would say next.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Wow.

Susan Dunlap:
And I think you speak that way.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Well, I'm not good at reading speeches, that's the only reason why.

Susan Dunlap:
But to just talk, if people relax and just talk. And then, if someone has any anxiety about public speaking, I think that anxiety can be rooted in what if I forget what I'm supposed to say next. If you just speak, there is nothing to worry about forgetting because you're just talking.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Right, right. That's absolutely true. I also think we get worried about it because we know so much. And I've talked with some of the commissioners and other folks who do some public speaking and I'm not an expert, my mom taught it though. But I always say you're never going
to make every point, pick out three of them. Pick out three ... Rule of three, right? But just pick out three points you're trying to make and stick with those because, if you try to make 17 points, nobody's going to be able to hear or understand you. But if you're just trying to make three, pick the big three and, if somebody remembers two out of three, you've done great.

Susan Dunlap:
And you've just summarized what's so great about those fact sheets.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah.

Susan Dunlap:
The reason, as you probably recall, those got started, let's just give them this information, let's capture this and then, if legislators have any questions, they come back to OLRA and they ask. So, reel them in, whet their appetite and then here we are to help. What you said about keeping it to three points, whether that's a slide that DCBS is going to give to the subcommittee or anybody else, put those three to five things on that slide and be done with it and then people can come and ask the follow-up questions, you don't have to write a book.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Well, Greg Stumbo is former speaker of the house, former attorney general, I remember I was getting ready to speak at something, he pulls on me and he says, "Remember the five Bs," and he said, "Be brief, brother, be brief," and so I remember that. And really, almost every time I speak, I go through that in my head because people never mind if you're a little short, they mind if you've gone on too long. And so, you run into trouble, I think, when people get lost in what you're trying to say and you get lost in what you're trying to say and, if you speak about those things that you're confident in and are passionate about, that comes through.

Susan Dunlap:
It does, it does. And the best compliment, I think, that someone can get is, "Oh, my gosh, you only had two or three minutes to speak, that went by in a flash. Can you come back and talk again?"

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah, that's right.

Susan Dunlap:
Or the stories that someone tells. And Julianne Hatton who's in the public affairs group, after the flooding in Eastern Kentucky, she came to the office one day and was recounting a story that she heard about a family who was in there, I believe it was a mobile home, and the water came up and it was the family members and they were there with pets. They moved the pets up to overhead cupboards in the kitchen to try to get them out of harm's way and just the
harrowing account that ended up with family members hanging in trees. She could hardly even talk about it and she didn't see it firsthand. This is an as-told-to situation and then she articulated that so well to us, we felt the emotion and at least I have passed along that account of what had happened because there's no speech, there's no talking points or anything that can take the place of just putting that out there.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Those stories, they can be so powerful and even in the tornadoes. I think we did a podcast on this and Julianne Hatton is the person that makes us sound smart on these podcasts, I so appreciate it. But the woman in the office, DCBS office who was there during the tornadoes and saved neighbors and I think was really happy she got a mention in one of the Governor's State of the Commonwealth addresses because she deserved it and we deserve it. And the things that actually folks do every day in the DCBS offices, in WIC offices for SNAP and for guardianship and I can go on and on across all sorts of different programs here, we have stories. We have stories that I think are powerful and it's really important for us to learn how to tell them, I think, from a couple of different perspectives.

One is so people can understand what we do, using our voice that way. Another is I honestly believe, sometimes telling those stories as they occur to us, that's healing. And in some ways, it's sharing some of the burden and sharing some of the insight that we have from our jobs. I swear, I'd love to see us write a Cabinet for Health and Family Services book, we need to figure out how to do that. We've talked about that for a while about how to capture some of the stories that we all have and I encourage people to do that. We've asked some across the cabinet for that but it's also that power that you have in yourself in your own communities to tell those stories and how to communicate those stories.

Susan Dunlap:

Right. Well, I think, to some degree, it's modesty too. At one of your leadership meetings, Joe Bringardner, we were talking about the state fair wrap up and about the distribution of Narcan and Joe mentioned that he had Narcan and he had used it to help save somebody that was, I think, behind a fast food restaurant or something, just happened to be in the path of somebody in distress. I don't know that he would ever think, "I need to come forward with that story," I just think that's part of who he is and he's just going to be prepared and he's going to do the right thing when he is in that moment.

And I think that's true for pretty much everybody in this cabinet. And I honestly think it doesn't occur to them to say I should document this or I should pass this along to public affairs but, of course, we are hungry for that kind of information. We're always here for anyone that would like to pass it along and we'll find good use for it.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Oh, absolutely, we will. I think there is a modesty piece of it. I've seen it where somebody's coworker has to coax them to tell the story. "You should tell. They need to know this," but it's also that story is power. That story is somebody's personal power and the relaying of that story for what can happen for an individual maybe that we're serving, there's power in that story too,
there's power of resilience. And so, all of those stories, I think, lend to the impact that we have and, honestly, our own personal power and personal resilience to be able to tell that story, not as braggadocious, that's not where we're coming from, but it is here's the impact we have. And secondary trauma, all of that that we see, being able to tell those stories and being able to connect with the purpose of those stories and the impact of those stories, hopefully that builds our resilience and builds our strength to do that.

Susan Dunlap:
I agree. But I'm going to be the pot calling the kettle black because I think you are one of the people who are the most guilty about not talking about it. There are some things that you're involved with like the opioid abatement, that commission, you are the designated person to be part of that group but that's a really big deal and that's making a lot of impact. And some of those stories that were told when your group went around across the state to do the needs assessment, hear from the community, some of those who are in recovery came up and told their stories which, the way I process that, there's a reluctance for some people to say I've used Narcan and it saved my life. But that was proof that there are plenty out there who are willing to talk about it, right?

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah.

Susan Dunlap:
But that broader message is, whether you're someone who's benefited from something like that or you are on our side as an employee and you see it, it would be great if everybody could get more comfortable with talking about what it is that they do that's doing something positive for a Kentuckian.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah, that's true, that's true. I don't even realize I'm secretary. I go by that wall where pictures are up and I'm like, "Who is that? Looks like a troll. Looks like a garden gnome," anyway. And then I realized it's me, it's very strange for me since ... I met with somebody who's over the long-term care association that we go back to the '90s when we worked together and we're like, "Can you believe any of this?" and it is hard to believe, I have to tell you, it's hard to believe. I don't know how it happened, it was very strange. So, you have recently moved.

Susan Dunlap:
I have. I have lived in Louisville, Lexington, Midway, now I'm in Owensboro and that's kind of your fault.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Oh.
Susan Dunlap: Did you know that?

Secretary Eric Friedlander: I did not know that.

Susan Dunlap: OK. So, it was one of those opioid task force.

Secretary Eric Friedlander: Oh, right. Uh-huh, yeah.

Susan Dunlap: And so, we had gone to the western part of the state for an obligation that you had in Paducah but, while we were out that direction, we also wanted to meet with media and let them know about the legislative fact sheets by county and all that, once again, that topic. And we visited some of those towns that were hardest hit after the tornadoes and it just was delightful to stop in Murray, we'd never been on that campus before. We had that interview with the NPR affiliate there, right?

Secretary Eric Friedlander: Oh, they were really good too. That was a very-

Susan Dunlap: Yes.

Secretary Eric Friedlander: They were very professional.

Susan Dunlap: And we went to Bowling Green, we stopped here, here, here, here, here. And at the time I thought, "Well, if I retire, maybe I should expatriate. I've heard you can live royalty in Portugal, Ireland, Panama, maybe I should just do that." And then I thought, "No, I'll never see my family ever again so maybe I should stay in Kentucky." So, I started to do the research on the best places to retire in Kentucky and factoring in natural resources and near an interstate and cost of living and all those kinds of things and Owensboro was on the short list. And it is two hours down I-64 from my family and I just bend and make this L shape and stop in Louisville and come on over into Frankfort.

And so, it has been an adjustment, there are upsides to everywhere but I'm still in Louisville, Frankfort, a minimum of two or three days a week. So, to split the week like that has actually been a really wonderful thing and the people out there are so nice. The gas is 60 cents less a
gallon, the cost of living is everything as advertised so it's been a good choice from that perspective, definitely.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah. I grew up in Louisville so I'm a river city fan so I do like Owensboro, Paducah and, yeah, all of those. All of the river cities I do enjoy. You also are a pretty good chef.

Susan Dunlap:
Well, I like to think so. I didn't enter the state fair though. I could have walked over from our booth and checked in on that blue ribbon status had I cared to. Yeah, I really love cooking. Grew up in a family, my grandmother cooked a lot, my mother cooked a lot and I just really get into it and like trying new recipes. In fact, when COVID hit, one of my New Year's resolutions was to bake something new and take it into the office once a month and it was really intricate, fancy kinds of pastries and all this kind of thing. So, they were pretty disappointed when we all stopped coming into the office.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
I'll bet. You were associated with teaching some of that too, right?

Susan Dunlap:
I was. There's a independent cooking school in Louisville called Cooking at the Cottage in St. Matthew's and it's the only one in the state and they draw people from all over who come and watch a Sullivan faculty chef teach everything from Thai food to make your own sushi, to baking a cake, to gingerbread or whatever depending on what the season is. And that was good to be an onlooker and an assistant to whoever the chef was that was teaching that night so I kind of did that for fun and I did learn a lot.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Did you?

Susan Dunlap:
The biggest takeaway is never trust a mandolin slicer. You always want to wear the mesh glove.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Oh, sure.

Susan Dunlap:
Yes. Because I was making scallop potatoes on Christmas morning and cut off the tip of one of my fingers.
Secretary Eric Friedlander:
I'm not necessarily mechanically inclined, I define myself as mechanically declined and my wife says I'm never done fixing something until I'm bleeding. So, if I ever had a mandolin slicer, which I do not but I like to cook, yeah, I would definitely need the mesh metal, maybe ask somebody else to do it.

Susan Dunlap:
I haven't used it since.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Oh, yeah, yeah.

Susan Dunlap:
I'm just scared to.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, what are some other things that you do for self-care?

Susan Dunlap:
Oh, wow. So, there's this really wonderful gym in Owensboro and they have classes that I've never seen anywhere else and one thing they offer is blacklight cycling on Tuesdays after work. So, if it's a day where I'm not at the L&N building which is my second office, I guess, or I'm not in Frankfort, I try to hit that class as often as possible. And I'm really crazy about music. I used to be a music critic for LEO when John Yarmuth had it and just really enjoyed that. So, I like to go to live shows, I may run into Astrud or Joe or anybody, you just never can tell but I'm out and about for a lot of that. And Graham Shelby, when he worked here, he hosts the Moth Storytelling bimonthly events, I guess, it is in Louisville and I try to hit those and-

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Oh, yeah.

Susan Dunlap:
Yeah, just change it up and try to keep things interesting. Independent film, I like to see those, like what you see at a Sundance festival and, yeah.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
That sounds like fun. I go home and go to sleep. It's time for a nap now. But absolutely, those all sound fantastic. Susan, I know I told you I'm so grateful that you agreed to come to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services in a time of need and do such a tremendous job. And it's just like a lot of folks who came here, right people, right time and I think we're so fortunate that you joined us and we're also so fortunate that you all are joining listening to us. So, please continue to do that, I hope you enjoy this podcast and that you'll come back and listen to more.
Susan Dunlap:
As do I. Keep supporting the Office of Public Affairs.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:
Hooray. See you next time or hear you next time.

Julianne Hatton:
Thanks for joining us on CHFS Community, hosted by Secretary Eric Friedlander, produced by Julianne Hatton. Our assistant producer is Brice Mitchell with help from Jennifer Hubbard. Find us at chfs.ky.gov and tell all your friends about the show. Until next time, stay healthy Kentucky.