

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript  
Episode #11,  
“Awakening the strength of community with Kathy Coffey”  
Sno-Isle Libraries, Dec. 14, 2018



Speaker 1:	00:00	Did you know you could download some of the best business and finance magazines for free with your Sno-Isle Library's card? Learn more online at Sno-Isle Libraries.
Ken Harvey:	00:13	Coming up in today's episode, we'll examine the power of community, leadership development, and creating the future of common unity as we chat with leader of leaders, and TEDxSnoIsleLibraries 2017 speaker, Kathy Coffey.
Ken Harvey:	00:35	Welcome to Episode 11 of the Check It Out Podcast from Sno-Isle Libraries. This is the podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds, and made possible by the support of the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.
Speaker 2:	00:48	The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.
Ken Harvey:	00:55	So we're here in the ... in our luxurious studios here at the Service Center for Sno-Isle Libraries, and actually today the studio looks like a big meeting room, which is outside our normal pattern of doing these interviews in a much smaller meeting room. We were here today because we just happen to be taking some host and crew photos for marketing purposes. I am joined here by my illustrious and infamous co-host, Paul Pitkin, from the Executive Director of Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.
Paul Pitkin:	01:36	Thank you, Ken. I don't think I can live up to that introduction, but I'll try.
Ken Harvey:	01:41	Well, all of us adoring fans from the non-profit world and from the musical world are just waiting to hear Paul ask some pithy questions as part of this interview. We are pleased to spend some time with a special studio guest we have, Kathy Coffey, who is the Executive Director of our region's most dynamic leadership development organization, that's Leadership Snohomish County.

(Continued)

- Ken Harvey: 02:06 Prior to joining that organization in 2014, Kathy spent 16 years in higher education. She was Assistant Director of Edmonds Community College Foundation, so she kind of shares some of this similar world with Paul, and Development Relations Coordinator at Bastyr University in Seattle, I believe. She was also co-owner of Pivot Edmonds, a community magazine market place and community engagement site.
- Ken Harvey: 02:35 Now Kathy serves ... She's incredibly busy. I don't know how she finds time and space, mental space and emotional space, to do everything she does, but you're gonna discover just how incredible she is. She serves as a commissioner with the city of Lynnwood Human Services Commission, and a board member of YMCA and Community Sourced Capital, which is a really fascinating organization, and we will have a link to those groups in our show notes.
- Ken Harvey: 03:04 She is also an advisory board member of Leadership Launch, and we'll talk a little bit more about that as we get into the program. So Kathy, we are delighted to have you with us. Thanks for joining us.
- Kathy Coffey: 03:13 Thank you. I'm excited to be here.
- Ken Harvey: 03:15 Well, you ... I don't think I said in that introduction anything about your being one of our TEDxSnoIsleLibraries speakers in 2017.
- Kathy Coffey: 03:28 I was. It was an honor to get to do a TED talk and a very different experience from anything that I've ever done before.
- Ken Harvey: 03:35 Well, share a little bit about the ... Well, I should just mention to the audience that her TEDx talk is posted on the Sno-Isle Libraries website, and all you have to do is go to our website and type in TEDx and she'll be there listed with about 52 extraordinary human beings who step out on the Red Circle, and over a three year span, and shared some incredible ideas. So you'll find her talk there and really wanna invite people to go take a look at that and be inspired by it.
- Ken Harvey: 04:14 What was it like?
- Kathy Coffey: 04:17 You know, doing a TED talk ... First of all, the honor of being asked is a tremendous one and humbling all in itself. Then you-
- Ken Harvey: 04:26 Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute. As I recall, you weren't so much asked as you were nominated by a friend.

Kathy Coffey: 04:32 I was nominated and then I made the cut.

Ken Harvey: 04:35 Yes. Were you nominated with your knowledge, or were you surprised to discover ...

Kathy Coffey: 04:42 I was surprised to discover, and then I even walked into the interview not knowing-

Ken Harvey: 04:47 Like why am I here?

Kathy Coffey: 04:48 Yeah, what the topic was.

Paul Pitkin: 04:49 That was your first mistake.

Kathy Coffey: 04:51 That I was being nominated for. Then going through the interview process was unique, and then speaking to ... Like I could talk all day long about leadership or talk about you and how you can find your own strengths, but to talk about me is different. To think you know how to talk in a group setting for business purposes is very different than learning how to talk in a TEDx setting. Then even being that vulnerable in a way that is documented for anyone to locate moving forward is very interesting and powerful as well.

Paul Pitkin: 05:37 I've always been ... One of the things that fascinates me about the TEDx programs that we've put on is people like you who I consider somebody who's really good at just speaking, and speaking from, kind of, off the cuff and just very natural. I'm always curious about how did you ... Did you memorize your whole speech? Did you ... 'Cause I know that there's a lot of coaching that goes on and a lot of things getting right down to the second. Did you go through that? Did you memorize it?

Kathy Coffey: 06:07 I memorized my entire speech and I actually went to Iceland to do that.

Paul Pitkin: 06:12 Iceland's fantastic, by the way. I've been there.

Kathy Coffey: 06:14 Yeah, so-

Paul Pitkin: 06:15 It's a good place to-

Kathy Coffey: 06:16 Great place-

Paul Pitkin: 06:16 To memorize a talk.

Kathy Coffey: 06:18 Out in the middle of nowhere, on beaches, by water falls, driving around the country with my TED talk. I had a week and I'm sure it's not a common way to memorize a TED talk, but it was really effective. So I would just wake up, I would practice it, and then I would go about my day, and then I would drive. I drove around the whole country.

Ken Harvey: 06:38 Wow.

Kathy Coffey: 06:38 And did my TED talk in my car so I could memorize the words and how it went, and it was much harder than I thought.

Ken Harvey: 06:48 So what did you speak about in your TEDx talk? What was the idea?

Kathy Coffey: 06:52 Community. People matter, common unity. There's more of me when I'm connected to you. Just the basic premise that I think it's the foundation of everything that we are. People-

Ken Harvey: 07:08 That's really beautiful.

Kathy Coffey: 07:09 Thank you. It's funny because I've had people contact me from different parts of the states. Like there was someone in Ohio that asked if there ... They were doing a poverty outreach group through their church and asked, "Can we use your common unity in our work?" And its' like, "Sure. It's not mine, but you're more than welcome to use it." So I think finding those words within one word, even though it just shows that we see it all the time, but we don't always see it.

Ken Harvey: 07:45 So just for the sake of those who haven't made the link yet, let me just stop and say we are chatting with Kathy Coffey who is the Executive Director for Leadership Snohomish. She also happen to have been one of our TEDxSnoIsleLibraries speaker in 2017 and she's ... We're talking right now about the idea, the talk, and the idea that she shared from the Red Circle. You just said ... You just talked about common unity and both of those being roots of the word community.

Kathy Coffey: 08:20 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 08:22 So, I have to admit that when you delivered that talk, I had never looked at that that way before. So I mean, it still continues to be pretty profound to me.

Kathy Coffey: 08:36 It's interesting. I'm looking over here at your Sno-Isle signs and, "a community doorway to reading, resources, and lifelong learning." Common unity.

Paul Pitkin: 08:50 Interesting concept too considering that the word community is used for so many different things now.

Kathy Coffey: 08:54 It is.

Paul Pitkin: 08:55 And so to actually have something like common unity, sort of, can bring all those things into one bucket really.

Ken Harvey: 09:04 So the ... I, too, like Paul have heard you speak to different size groups, and I just thought that you were an incredible speaker. You did speak from the heart, and you know, very authentic. I think probably just going into the TEDx experience, just forecasting it I would've said, "She won't have any trouble at all. It'll be a slam dunk for someone like Kathy Coffey."

Paul Pitkin: 09:42 Instead it sent her to Iceland by herself.

Kathy Coffey: 09:46 All by herself. Now, how ironic is that?

Paul Pitkin: 09:48 Yeah, exactly. It drove you mad.

Kathy Coffey: 09:52 But it was hard, and being on stage was hard, and having it memorized, and not being able to be spontaneous was hard.

Paul Pitkin: 10:00 That's what I thought would be a tough one.

Kathy Coffey: 10:02 And honestly, I did have a moment when I spoke where I froze and it's because there was a clock. When I looked down and saw that clock ticking, I lost everything. Everything flew out of my head, and I stood there and for one minute I thought, "Okay. I bet people have not finished them before, and if I walk off, will I lose my job? I don't think I'll lose my job." And all these zzz right through my head, and then it all came back, and then I continued and found the rest of my speech. But it was really scary, and that time piece for me was a constraint that didn't bring out the best in me.

Ken Harvey: 10:48 Well it's interesting because in TED and TEDx events, there's typically ... For those who have not been to one or have only sat in the audience, you don't realize that the speakers on stage have a time piece, essentially a digital countdown, that's happening that's in their field of view, and that lets them know how much time is remaining from the time that they had said

their talk would last, the length of their talk. So for you, you didn't find it that helpful. It actually became a distraction. I do recall being in the audience and watching that, watching that pause, that continued on-

- Kathy Coffey: 11:36 On, and on, and on, and on-
- Ken Harvey: 11:38 And frankly, I thought I ... It came across to me as an incredible, powerful moment because the things that you had been speaking about were so meaningful that it just seemed like you were giving me, as an audience member, an opportunity to let it sink in, to think through the implications or ramifications of what you just shared.
- Kathy Coffey: 12:05 Yeah, and I think that was a bit of all of that in there, but it was ...
- Paul Pitkin: 12:08 Also a minor panic attack?
- Kathy Coffey: 12:11 Yeah. It was like, "Wow." It was very ... What a process.
- Ken Harvey: 12:15 Yeah. Well-
- Kathy Coffey: 12:16 What a gift.
- Ken Harvey: 12:18 Well, why do you say a gift?
- Kathy Coffey: 12:20 Just to ... The examination it takes to reduce your thoughts to something that you want to talk about that you care enough about? The gift to communicate your ideas to other people with the intention of trying to have an impact and change how they see things. It's a gift of presence that I was very blessed to have.
- Ken Harvey: 12:51 So when you were done with the talk and you said, "Thank you," and there was applause. What were you thinking then?
- Kathy Coffey: 13:04 I believe I was out the back door and gone because-
- Ken Harvey: 13:06 By that time.
- Kathy Coffey: 13:09 And I do recall someone said, "Well, they wanted you to come back," and it's like, "Oh, I was outside."
- Paul Pitkin: 13:14 Sorry. Out of there.
- Kathy Coffey: 13:17 Yeah, breathing is important.

- Ken Harvey: 13:19 So you mentioned though that you've been contacted by a church group, and have you had any feedback from others since the talk was posted?
- Kathy Coffey: 13:29 I have. I've had a lot of really great feedback, and the inspiration to be vulnerable is a powerful one. The idea of connecting and how important community is has come across. I've spoken to a few groups after that about the process itself. I've gone to a Toastmasters group to talk about how TEDx does it versus how Toastmasters does. It's been really good feedback.
- Ken Harvey: 14:05 So has the idea that you shared evolved any based upon feedback and life experience since then? Or if you were gonna do another TEDx in the future, would you do an idea that is the result of some evolution?
- Kathy Coffey: 14:24 That's a great question, Ken. I think that I am going the first week of October to the National Conference on Building Communities in Portland, and I love that there's a national conference. Leadership Snohomish County is taking the lead on a visioning process for our whole county, and I believe that that is grounded in community and grass roots. So if anything, it's just confirmed my value of connecting people in person and building community.
- Ken Harvey: 15:04 So tell us more about this, kind of, vision for the future work.
- Kathy Coffey: 15:10 We are ... Well, our region is unique in that it's one of the fastest growing areas in the country. Our county ... I see our county as a same demographic of our country. We have an urban center, we have a lot of agriculture, we have a big red and blue population, we have a lot of different religions, and that's not true for a lot of counties. So and at the same time, we're experiencing huge growth that's rather unprecedented in other regions. Growth can either be something that you work to plan, or it can happen to you, and I think we're in a unique place where we can connect community because any real change happens through grass roots engagement.
- Kathy Coffey: 16:11 So many times we get all the same people, the same faces, the leaders, the government leaders, the elected officials doing their best, but even if you go to any city council meeting, and I defy you to go to any city in our county, you don't have a lot of community engagement. Our voter rates are really low. There's just a lot going on that is failing to connect our systems with the people that want to benefit from them.

Kathy Coffey: 16:42 So it was suggested to me that a nonpartisan organization, such as Leadership Snohomish County, would be a good organization to take the lead in bringing together grass roots engagement with the leaders and address some of the issues that the larger groups, like the Puget Sound Regional Council, is doing tremendous visioning and really important work. But it tends to involve economic development, transportation, and work force development. There's a lot of human issues that we could take a closer look at as citizens, and connect to empower government to be able to address those while they're focusing on them.

Paul Pitkin: 17:29 It's a little bit like civics to some degree.

Kathy Coffey: 17:33 It is.

Paul Pitkin: 17:33 Because you're kind of ... In some of the different organizations that you're talking about, the engagement ends up being experts, and then the regular citizen rate, they can't relate to what's happening 'cause they're not experts. But yet, they are a part of what's gonna happen.

Kathy Coffey: 17:47 Exactly, and I don't even think they teach civics in school anymore.

Paul Pitkin: 17:50 They don't.

Kathy Coffey: 17:51 Most people don't know what civics-

Ken Harvey: 17:53 It sounds like an old fashioned word to me-

Paul Pitkin: 17:53 They don't-

Kathy Coffey: 17:53 It's not.

Paul Pitkin: 17:55 And a lot of people talked about bringing it back.

Kathy Coffey: 17:57 Yeah.

Paul Pitkin: 17:58 Because they look at the polarization that we're experiencing right now. I would say that polarization is an outgrowth of what you just talked about, it's people, regular people, not relating to the functions and the systems that are impacting them every day. They don't ... There's just not a connection there.

Kathy Coffey: 18:14 It's such ... The work gets bigger every day. I'm a little daunted by it. But when I went to Executive Somers and said, "This is what we're ... Does this really need to be done? Is this

important?" He was excited about the work, and he has given me his Chief of Staff who sits on the committee that's doing the planning, and they have fiscally stood behind the work. The city of Everett gave me their ... Mayor Franklin came in and gave me her Community Director, and so there's a lot of engagement because even government knows that they need the grass roots to engage and make a difference to build what we're looking to build.

- Kathy Coffey: 18:59 Then as I've tried to ... There's a process called civic DNA. A group in Denver did this back in 2000, after they had a big economic crash in 2008. They went in 2011 and started to define their civic DNA, and so I've used a lot of that process as well as some work that was done in Austin and Indianapolis. A class of Leadership Snohomish County class group last year did some work to lay the foundation for this event. Honestly without their work, we wouldn't even be having this event today. So that's the importance of our project work, and engagement, and then we will ... We've done some focus groups around deciding who are we as a county because in our program, just as we need to know individually who we are before we can apply that as a leader, our county needs to know who it is too. So we will end up with those defining adjectives.
- Ken Harvey: 20:04 So what do we think, and what do we hope, this area is like when this effort is done, or will this effort ever truly be done?
- Kathy Coffey: 20:18 I would turn that on you and ask you. What do you think that it needs to look like and imply that we're never done with the work, I think?
- Ken Harvey: 20:27 That's not just a Jedi mind trick that you're doing to me-
- Kathy Coffey: 20:29 It wasn't. It's not. No.
- Ken Harvey: 20:32 So you're essentially saying that it's not really just for one person to define. It's all of our voices speaking to the future we want to create and the place we want to live in.
- Kathy Coffey: 20:43 Exactly. That's one thing that Sno-Isle has in common that has made you such a natural partner with Leadership Snohomish County is there are not a lot of organizations at all that are truly nonpartisan in how they bring people together. It's the key to having solid results that are good for everybody, and libraries have always been that nonpartisan gathering place where you can bring people together, like your issues that matter.

Paul Pitkin: 21:19 I was just gonna say that what you're talking about, this whole project, makes me think kind of micro level of issues that matter.

Kathy Coffey: 21:24 Yeah. You're bringing the community together, you're talking about what matters, you're bringing the experts in, and it is ... The goal is to gather and convene for greater outcome without an agenda that's tied to anything that resembles a partisan topic. That's what gives you the strength to be able to do that, and we share that lack of agenda at Leadership Snohomish County.

Ken Harvey: 21:56 Well, Snohomish ... Leadership Snohomish and Sno-Isle Libraries have been, kind of, walking arm in arm for quite a while.

Kathy Coffey: 22:03 We have.

Ken Harvey: 22:03 So I've been a great ... As I understand, it's been a great partnership.

Kathy Coffey: 22:08 It is.

Ken Harvey: 22:08 And-

Kathy Coffey: 22:09 And even with the summit work, we ... I needed to ... I want ... The work is no good unless it represents the whole county. Sno-Isle has worked with me to set up focus groups in Darrington, focus groups in Snohomish, focus groups in Stanwood, and be able to reach communities that you're already in. So why would I need to reinvent that when you're already doing the work that needs to be done there and connects us to those populations? So it's been a great partnership in that way too.

Ken Harvey: 22:44 Let's talk a little bit more about some of the other work at Leadership Snohomish and that essentially is training up generational leadership.

Paul Pitkin: 22:55 I need to do a full disclosure. I'm part of the Leadership Snohomish signature class of 2019. Is that the right way to say it?

Kathy Coffey: 23:03 That is.

Paul Pitkin: 23:06 And I just ... We just had our first two-day retreat last week, so it was an amazing experience. It was an exhausting experience.

Kathy Coffey: 23:15 It's exhausting.

- Paul Pitkin: 23:16 I've actually managed to run into not only ... We have another person here who's going through it, but I've run into a few other folks who went to those first two days like, "I can't believe how tired I was." It was interesting that it was a mixture of a lot of information, but also a lot of sharing, and a lot of disclosure and, sort of, community building and that sort of thing. I think that's what made it so tiring, but in a good way. It's like tiring after you ran five miles and you know it was really good for you.
- Paul Pitkin: 23:46 I wanted to ... Having experienced all that, there does seem to be a, sort of, Leadership Snohomish unifying theory of promoting leadership and talking about leadership. I was wondering if you could speak to that, the overall approach, because I know there's different things that you bring in, but I feel that there's something binding us all together.
- Kathy Coffey: 24:08 If I had to say the overall ... my overall hope from the ... from facilitating both the groups is to empower individuals, to realize that we all have our stories, and to find your strengths, and know that that's what you should focus on because that's where I believe we're put here. We each have different gifts that we can bring forward. So to figure out who you are and be able to apply that in the world, and then not compare that to all the other people and level the playing field.
- Kathy Coffey: 24:53 'Cause it's a little intimidating I think when you get into a room where everybody's a leader and you all kind of look around. Deep inside, I can run a leadership organization, but when I stand in front of you, I can be intimidated too 'cause we're really all just people. Leadership is really just a word, but we give it a lot of power, and so I hope to take the power out of the word, level the playing field, and help everybody figure out how they can make a difference.
- Paul Pitkin: 25:22 And I thought that that was one of the interesting things. One of the many interesting things we talked about was strength based leadership. You've kind of just talked about it. Can you go into a little bit more detail about what that means?
- Kathy Coffey: 25:36 We've tried different things over the year. There's a 100 different tools you can use to figure out who you are. Aligning with the strength based system for leadership really helps people to define how they think, engage, and interact with each other, and problems, and figure out what their ... We just work with the top five strengths, and so those get put out there. But as a team, when I put the project teams together, I put all the different types in the project things. Some are thinkers, some are feelers, some are doers, and you need that balance. But our

society oftentimes tells us to work at what we're not good at, and we're about figuring about what you are good at and getting better at it, and then you have a chance for greater impact.

- Paul Pitkin: 26:29 That's what I thought was really ... It's an interesting idea, and it's also one that's ... It's kind of makes you open your mind in a different way because you're right. In society, it's always like, "What is your weakness? You need to fix that." It's always a fix what you are lame at.
- Kathy Coffey: 26:49 I will never be good at math.
- Paul Pitkin: 26:52 Yeah, and I thought one of the interesting things that we talked about was you may never be good at math and you could spend hours, and hours, and hours to get semi-mediocre at math. Whereas what if you diverted all those hours to going at your strengths and turning those into something even stronger? That, to me, is such a powerful notion, and it's just ... It's really refreshing. The idea of getting teams together so that all these strengths are coming together and creating this amazing team where you're not focusing on what everyone's bad at, you're focusing on what everyone's good at. It seems kind of like all that should ... like an obvious thing? But it's not.
- Kathy Coffey: 27:34 It's not.
- Ken Harvey: 27:35 Well, I think one of the reasons why ... Or let me put it this way. What do you think about my saying that maybe one of the reasons why it's not so obvious is that there are pressures in seemingly in society that tell us, "Well, you seem to become good at everything, so you don't have to rely upon anyone else." Because if I'm ... But if I'm willing to trust others and rely upon things that they're good at that I'm not so good at, it helps ... In some ways, it takes a lot of the focus off me, it's not just about me any longer. But it really makes me and everyone else stronger.
- Kathy Coffey: 28:22 And you just defined community.
- Ken Harvey: 28:24 It's us.
- Kathy Coffey: 28:25 Yeah. So it's not about that one anymore. Everything you said just leading up to that is why if we rely on other people, and ask, and work together, then we're stronger when we're not just alone. We don't have to do it all ourselves, and we do have a culture in many ways that enforces that asking for help is

weak. Even ... I looked over at some of the questions and there was a question about when you have someone ask you about if libraries are relevant or something-

Ken Harvey: 29:03

Yes.

Kathy Coffey: 29:04

And I did this a long time ago and I had forgotten about it until I was going through here, but I used to tell people if they would be like, "Google or Bing, just look it up and you've got that there." I defy anybody who's working on a subject to take just that one idea that they just Googled or Binged and then go to the library and then ask a librarian what they have on that same subject, and then be given books, and then online resources that are data. You think Google has busted your curiosity and answered everything, and when you take that one step to see that there's so much learning that happens outside that search bar, that you're not aware of, then it's pretty ... That is the relevance of libraries, and asking for help, and getting way more information than you ever would on your own.

Paul Pitkin: 30:01

Isn't it interesting that related to both the library and to what we just talked about, building a team and being vulnerable enough as a leader to say, "I don't have all these skills, but I want to ask for help," isn't it interesting that we find people in this day, like you just said, where people think, "Oh, I'm gonna Google this." Then there's a total information overload because I can't make sense of it. It literally makes people feel atomized and alone as they're sitting there on Google and they get this one little piece of information and they don't know where it came, and they don't know who's representing it, and then, well I don't even know how I'm gonna get the other side of this, or I don't know how I'm gonna get the deep data on this, or whatever. So then they have to ask ... Then they can ask for help.

Kathy Coffey: 30:42

They can.

Paul Pitkin: 30:42

From the library, and they can get it, and then it's ... It's just like all the things that we're talking about.

Kathy Coffey: 30:49

Yeah. Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 30:49

So do you find that, Kathy, that ... Oh by the way, I should just stop for a second and say we're talking with Kathy Coffey, the Executive Director of Leadership Snohomish and also one of our TEDx library speakers. Kathy, I'm just wondering if you find yourself talking with leaders and/or just acquaintances and

family members at times about the library, whether it's Sno-Isle Libraries or others, and they seem to be surprised that the library is even a conversation anymore with the internet available. Are they ... people surprised about what the library is offering do you find, or?

Kathy Coffey: 31:30 I think they may have forgotten how to engage with a library. I think the library ... Unless they have kids. I think that Sno-Isle in particular, the last five, ten years, when things are changing so fast has worked, TEDx is a perfect example, hard to remain relevant and redefine themselves in a world that thinks it knows what it wants. Whether it's TEDx, Issues That Matter, the whole system available at the Marysville Library to do, the grants-

Ken Harvey: 32:19 For foundations and nonprofits?

Kathy Coffey: 32:21 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 32:21 The foundation center.

Paul Pitkin: 32:22 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kathy Coffey: 32:23 That's amazing, the Lynda and the job training, people who are-

Ken Harvey: 32:29 Lynda.com, by the way, and not just Lynda.

Kathy Coffey: 32:32 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 32:32 There are some Lyndas out there-

Paul Pitkin: 32:36 Yeah. Don't go up to our libraries and hound Lyndas.

Kathy Coffey: 32:38 "Hi, is Lynda here?"

Kathy Coffey: 32:43 Then even the Libby and the overdrives. So getting books ... When I realized I could get the books and listen to them in the car, and I hear people all the time, "Audible is so expensive," I'm like, "Why are you even using that?"

Paul Pitkin: 33:04 It's also a total pain, just so people know. Oh my ...

Kathy Coffey: 33:09 So there's so many ways that Sno-Isle has given us the tools, and worked, and I'm a big Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory fan. I'm excited to see your new leadership-

Ken Harvey: 33:21 Our Executive Director.

Kathy Coffey: 33:22 Yes, and I'm excited to see your new leadership come in with the foundation that she has laid for your library moving forward with her vision and staying relevant has been amazing.

Ken Harvey: 33:34 Absolutely.

Kathy Coffey: 33:35 Yeah. So, that's what I think.

Paul Pitkin: 33:40 We've never heard what you think before, Kathy.

Kathy Coffey: 33:45 I'm glad you asked.

Paul Pitkin: 33:46 Could you talk a little bit more about ... So when it comes to ... What got you interested in studying leadership and cultivating, finding new ways to create new leaders? Because you talked earlier about the future, and what's more future focused than each year cranking out new leaders? So what originally got you interested in this kind of work?

Kathy Coffey: 34:07 I would say ... I sound like a broken record. It always go back to that community thing. But I've always, my strength, I used to have an art gallery years ago and it was in Phinney Ridge. Then I had an art show that I did for women artists and carried self-published poets, and people that did their own cassette tapes back then because people didn't have any of those, like early 1990s, and so musicians too. But I have always been about empowering other people to see what they're good at, and art is much the same way. I don't know many artists that are full of hubris and confidence about their work.

Kathy Coffey: 34:52 So this is really just an extension of that same ... If I've been given a gift, I think my gift is helping other people see theirs. Whether it's through art or now having the opportunity through Leadership Snohomish County, it came to me when I wasn't looking for a job. It was ... I was actually gonna be a candidate for the class the next year and someone said, "You need to apply for this job." Down the road, it worked out and I do believe it aligns with my skills to be able to empower others.

Paul Pitkin: 35:27 Well, it's part of what you're teaching leaders to do, is to empower other people as well, so it's like you're passing it down.

Kathy Coffey: 35:32 Passing it down.

Ken Harvey: 35:35 So one of the challenges that I know you're aware that leaders have is balance because there's lot of demands, and their time

and energy, and attention that can be demands from the inside and the outside. The priority is that they're trying to juggle are often conflicting, and that can be pretty stressful for leaders. How well do you feel like you've balanced those things? What have you ... What does Leadership Snohomish try and instill in leaders in training?

- Kathy Coffey: 36:20 I like that you said from the inside and the outside because I've never seen people more overwhelmed with their jobs and lives in the last two years than I do now. Consistently everybody. Whether ... And it's because we have so many communication options in the world. I can get work requests from ten different places, and outside my inbox which is out of control on its own. I have my own practice that helps me stay grounded. I wear ... It's funny. I wear a level around my neck, and I have worn this for ...
- Ken Harvey: 37:01 That's what that is.
- Kathy Coffey: 37:02 It is. Yeah. No one can see it, but I have a little, like, just builders, a level that I have worn around my neck for about 15 years every day to remind me that balance is elusive. I think we look at the big picture of balance, and when you're parenting small children ,or when you're just in a new relationship, or when you're going through the loss of loved ones, things are out of balance. But if you look a the big picture, and I think that's where we're supposed to end up in getting balanced, I start my day with 10 minutes of writing, 10 minutes of silent meditation, and 10 minutes of exercise. It's not a lot of either one, but it's enough to ... Before I let the world in, I get to be in touch with myself.
- Kathy Coffey: 37:54 I think I have someone that I work with that is often overwhelmed with all the priorities and everything. For her, I just ask, "If anyone gonna die? Is there any blood? Will anyone notice, other than you, for the expectation that you set of yourself if this is accomplished on Tuesday instead of Friday?" Usually the answer is, "No blood, nobody's gonna die, and no one else will notice." I think if we could just stop and lighten up on ourselves a lot, then we'd all feel better.
- Ken Harvey: 38:32 We interviewed another TEDxSnoIsleLibraries speaker who also happened to be a basketball player, and we were joking that, especially sometimes with athletes, there's a saying, "No blood. No foul." So if there's no blood, of course, there's no infraction. Then if there is blood, then as my mom used to say, "Just don't get it on the carpet. Take it outside."

Kathy Coffey: 38:59 Thanks, mom.

Paul Pitkin: 39:02 Ah, the wisdom of parents.

Ken Harvey: 39:04 So there was a quote that I sent you by a guy named Jerzy Kosinski and it was that, "There was one place where I could find out who I was and what I was going to become, and that was the public library." I ask you to think about that, and maybe share with the audience what you thought.

Kathy Coffey: 39:20 I liked that. I think that not only did it provide ... You can find what you need at the library, and you can take it with you for a while. You don't have to leave it there. That's the beauty of all of it, and I think any resource or tool that I need to empower myself for others, or help me get better at something I don't know how to do, I can find at the library.

Ken Harvey: 39:52 So with the work that you and the Leadership Snohomish does with leaders in training, do you find that all those leaders actually recognize that they are leaders? That's who they are?

Kathy Coffey: 40:09 No, they do not. No.

Ken Harvey: 40:10 How do you help them be who they truly are? Or decide if that's who they want to be?

Kathy Coffey: 40:20 Taking the power out of the word, you can lead from anywhere. Some of the most, and that's back to the grass roots thing, but some of the ... organizationally, there's so many people in the middle that really are making things happen, and you look at the person at the top and they may not even know what's happening because the people in the middle are doing such a good job taking what they're supposed to do and moving that forward. That's leadership. If you look at the whole organization, they may not be identified as the leader, so I think we tend to put the word hierarchically in a place that doesn't include everybody, and I believe everybody can be a leader.

Paul Pitkin: 41:03 That hierarchical approach, I think, can attract maybe the wrong type kind of leaders. That's one thing that I was ... I'm not gonna go into too much specificity about it, but one of things I was learning about those first two days is I saw, as I was learning about different ways to lead, I saw examples in my own mind of past of the leaders I've come across who were terrible. As you go through the class, you can realize why. It very specifically some of the behaviors and some of the instincts that make the leaders not so good. As you broaden the, I think as you broaden

the idea of what a leader can be, then you attract different kinds of leaders. They don't have to be this one arc type of a leader than can be very difficult.

- Kathy Coffey: 41:48 Exactly.
- Ken Harvey: 41:50 So Kathy, in our last couple of minutes, what would you say to someone who is listening to this podcast and they're considering your words and they're thinking there's something in them that's really resonating with this whole notion of leadership, and they feel like there's something in them that wants to rise up and wants to be influential. They feel like they have something to contribute. They just don't know what to do with that, or maybe they're afraid. What would you say to them?
- Kathy Coffey: 42:26 I'd say that they can contact me any time and I'll talk to them. Then secondly, if I would say find someone that sees you. I don't think we ever see ourselves in the way that other people see us. Find someone that you know. Ask them to write you a letter of reference. You don't even have to have it for anything, but just allow other people to communicate to you how they see you, people that you feel that like you and believe in you. Find ways to take in the good in you that you're not seeing for some reason. That's my first thought.
- Paul Pitkin: 43:15 Lovely idea of having somebody write you a reference letter even though you don't need it. What a great exercise!
- Kathy Coffey: 43:21 It is. It just ... because I've said all mine from long ago, and it's just like, "Wow, look at that!" It just kind of makes you ... People see us like we don't ... We're our own worst critics. It's harsh.
- Ken Harvey: 43:40 I absolutely agree with that. I know that I had a coach once, and this was a executive coach, a leadership coach, who talked about the power of, and the potential of, helping yourself by asking a select number of individuals to give you a list of things that they thought you did well and maybe some things that you could work on. To take that list and cultivate, pull things from that list so that you could see in front of you the list of things that others think you do well. That could be ... and I found it, I did it, and I found it just incredibly illuminating because it showed me how I was perceived by others that my own internal voices didn't want me to see.

Kathy Coffey: 44:40 Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes we know it, but the fact that someone ... It's like, "Oh my gosh, they can see that?" That's really powerful.

Ken Harvey: 44:51 It's powerful.

Paul Pitkin: 44:51 Sometimes people don't have credibility with themselves. They need it from somebody else. They won't trust it unless it's coming from somebody else.

Kathy Coffey: 44:59 Then pretty soon if they do that enough, it can become their own. Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 45:03 Well, I think that the work that you and Leadership Snohomish is doing, and your partners and sponsors, is incredible.

Kathy Coffey: 45:12 Thank you, Sno-Isle Libraries.

Paul Pitkin: 45:13 Oh yeah, I would also mention the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.

Kathy Coffey: 45:16 And the Sno-Isle Foundation too.

Paul Pitkin: 45:17 It's one of those partners sponsors.

Ken Harvey: 45:19 Well in the work that has gone on that is leading and has led to so many individuals who have stepped out of where they were and stepped into, kind of, deliberate influence, choosing to make a difference, making an impact, and really helping shape the quality of life that we're enjoying in this region. I think that work is just incredible. It looks like with Paul now is part of the new class of Leadership Snohomish and others, that the future's bright.

Kathy Coffey: 46:02 And others. You don't have to do it alone.

Paul Pitkin: 46:04 Well, I'm grateful for that. I did want to mention one thing, Ken, and that was just wanted to tell Kathy as I was thinking about you driving around Iceland, did you go to the Western Fjords? Even the really weird parts?

Kathy Coffey: 46:18 I didn't.

Paul Pitkin: 46:19 Okay. Well, I just wanted you to think of this as you were driving around ... Since we were talking about growth, you were driving around Iceland by yourself memorizing your speech. I drove

around Iceland with my mother by myself, so I just want credit for that.

Kathy Coffey: 46:32 Yeah.

Paul Pitkin: 46:33 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 46:36 Good job, Paul.

Paul Pitkin: 46:37 Yeah. Thank you very much.

Ken Harvey: 46:39 You're a wonderful son.

Paul Pitkin: 46:39 Yeah, I am.

Kathy Coffey: 46:40 Did they send you a speeding ticket?

Paul Pitkin: 46:43 No, not that I know of.

Kathy Coffey: 46:44 Oh, never mind.

Paul Pitkin: 46:45 I had my mother with me, so she wouldn't let me speed. So, you know, there was that.

Ken Harvey: 46:50 Well, Kathy it's been incredible having you.

Kathy Coffey: 46:54 Thank you so much.

Ken Harvey: 46:54 As part of this episode. I just really wanted to encourage our listeners to go to our website. Type in TEDx and find Kathy's talk. It's one of many profound experiences you will have.

Paul Pitkin: 47:12 And I'll see you in a couple weeks.

Kathy Coffey: 47:14 Thank you. Thank you for asking me.

Paul Pitkin: 47:15 Thanks, Kathy.

Speaker 1: 47:17 Want to get the latest business news and solid financial advice from the experts for free? You can with your Sno-Isle Libraries account! Library customers can download the latest news and advice from publications like Entrepreneur, Kiplinger's, Fast Company, and Inc. You'll find feature stories around the business of technology, leadership, innovation, the stock market, retirement planning, and achieving financial success. All of that with a library card just waiting for you online at Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 47:48 If you have a great library experience you'd like to share with us, we would love to know about it. Drop us a line at [CheckItOutPodcast@Sno-Isle.org](mailto:CheckItOutPodcast@Sno-Isle.org). Again, that's [CheckItOutPodcast](http://CheckItOutPodcast.com), all one word, at [Sno-Isle.org](http://Sno-Isle.org). Who knows? We might even invite you to share your story on a future podcast. Coming up next, Book Notes.

Ken Harvey: 48:17 In this Book Notes segment, I am delighted to welcome a member of our Readers' Services team, Grant Perrigo. Grant and the team put together suggestions for customers of Sno-Isle Libraries, and especially for us, our podcast listeners who have a passion for things that we might have in our collection. So welcome, Grant.

Grant Perrigo: 48:40 Thanks.

Ken Harvey: 48:41 So Grant, what do you have as a suggestion for our listeners?

Grant Perrigo: 48:45 Alright. So the first book, Martin, he's just a normal computer programmer, but he happens to stumble across a text file on a computer. This text file controls all of human existence. You can change your height, you can change your weight, you can change your wealth, you can change your position on the planet or the time in which you live. So it's a little upsetting to him that this can all change, and of course he gets into a little bit of trouble with the law. What's Martin to do? Well, he decides to head back to the Middle Ages and try his trades as a real life wizard. It's title is *Off to Be the Wizard* by Scott Meyer.

Ken Harvey: 49:26 Interesting. So this text file that he finds is on a computer?

Grant Perrigo: 49:30 It's on a computer.

Ken Harvey: 49:32 Wow. And he can manipulate reality?

Grant Perrigo: 49:36 He can do any ... He can change anything he wants.

Ken Harvey: 49:39 Intriguing. Okay! What else do you have for our listeners?

Grant Perrigo: 49:42 Alright. The second book I have is called *Descender* by Jeff Lemire. It's a graphic novel. Jeff Lemire has also written a couple other books, most famously *Sweet Tooth*, and he also had a long run on *Animal Man*, which is a superhero comic. In this title, it's about a boy who controls as a key point for the war between aliens, humans, and robots. It's gonna be big for fans of the movie *AI*, or if you've read the graphic novel *Saga* by

Brian K. Vaughan, it's a good read alike. So that's Descender by Jeff Lemire.

Ken Harvey: 50:20 So Descender by Jeff Lemire and Off to Be a Wizard?

Grant Perrigo: 50:24 Off to Be THE wizard.

Ken Harvey: 50:25 The Wizard. Wow. So these two titles are available in what formats?

Grant Perrigo: 50:32 So Descender is just available in print, but Off to Be the Wizard is available digitally as well as in print.

Ken Harvey: 50:39 So someone could download it as a Kindle version or ...

Grant Perrigo: 50:46 Exactly, or read it in OverDrive Read.

Ken Harvey: 50:49 Great. So how did you come across these titles?

Grant Perrigo: 50:52 Well, Off to Be the Wizard was recommended to me by a friend, and then I actually came across Descender in my work as a selector for the system of teen and adult graphic novels.

Ken Harvey: 51:04 Wow. So I think we may want to have you back for a future segment so we get to learn more about what it's like to actually select titles that others can enjoy.

Grant Perrigo: 51:16 Happy to do it.

Ken Harvey: 51:16 Alright. Well thank you very much for joining us, and we look forward to seeing you again with more suggestions. Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 51:24 Enjoying this episode of the Check It Out Podcast? Head over the iTunes store, Google Play Music store, or most other podcast stores. To subscribe, rate the podcast or leave a review. Your rating and review will make it easier for others to find the Check It Out Podcast wherever it's available.