

Episode 27: Leadership in Criminal Justice and the Impact of the NCJA Leadership Academy

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Intro:

Welcome to The NCJA Podcast. This podcast series explores promising practices, provides guidance on strategic planning, and discusses how the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program, or Byrne JAG, contributes to improving justice systems across the country. We hope you enjoy it.

Chris Asplen:

Hello and welcome to The NCJA Podcast. I'm Chris Asplen. I'm the executive director here at NCJA, and today's podcast is about leadership, particularly leadership in the criminal justice system, and even more particularly in these challenging times. I'm really fortunate to be joined today by a long time colleague, Jane Wiseman.

Jane is an innovations in government fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation. She leads the Institute for Excellence in Government, a nonprofit consulting firm dedicated to improving government performance. She has served as an appointed official in government and as a financial advisor and consultant to governments. Her current consulting research and writing focuses on government innovation and data-driven decision-making. And more specific to our discussion today, Jane was the assistant secretary for public safety for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or the head of the State Administering Agency, the SAA. And for context, the state and territory SAAs make up the core, although not the exclusive membership of NCJA. We've been very fortunate to have Jane as a consultant with our NCJA Leadership Academy for Criminal Justice Executives, not just because of her broad research and experience in the area of organizational leadership, but also because of her personal experience in the criminal justice field and the world of the SAA. So thank you so much for joining us, Jane.

Jane Wiseman:

Gosh, thank you, Chris, for inviting me to join this podcast. It is very exciting to join you for this and thanks for that very kind intro. Just want to add to what you've already said that it was a joy for me to work on this project with you and the team, and a special shout out to the incomparable Simone Greene, who was my collaborator on this, and without whom the Leadership Academy would not have been nearly as wonderful or fun.

But also, it was a joy for me to work on this because it filled a hole that existed when I became an SAA. And I'm always happy to work in partnership with NCJA because but for NCJA, I would've had a really tough time leading my organization as an SAA, because there were not one, not two, but three outside investigations into improprieties in my organization, but four. NCJA and my peers who took me under their lovely wings and helped me, without NCJA and the other SAAs, I would've had a hard time riding that ship. So anyway, Chris, I'm excited about the Leadership Academy and eager to have you share a little bit more about it.

Chris Asplen:

Thanks, Jane. Your tenure was a little bit before my time at NCJA, but I'm glad that the organization was as helpful as it was. So let me kind of provide a little context here about what we're going to talk about. The NCJA Leadership Academy was developed with the recognition that while there are a lot of

leadership opportunities for particular lanes in criminal justice, so for the law enforcement lane, IACP does a fantastic job on their leadership trainings, National District Attorneys Association, they have their leadership trainings. But there's a whole nother, and I would suggest expanding group of leaders in the criminal justice system that don't have that kind of leadership guidance, that kind of leadership training that I think is really important. And particularly in the context of the SAA, across the country annually, SAAs are responsible for anywhere between 2.5 to \$3 billion annually. Those are the funds that they're responsible for.

And so we really thought that not just SAAs, but leaders of nonprofit organizations could really benefit from some specific intentional training around leadership and leadership principles.

I'll add to that idea. What we are seeing in the criminal justice system is what I refer to as kind of a flattening of organizations in the criminal justice system. And by that, I mean we're seeing a lot more organizations much closer to the ground, right? We're seeing many more organizations that are community-based organizations, and so there are a lot more of them. And that's really the way forward in criminal justice is to empower communities to help make themselves safer. That means a lot of people wanting to do a lot of good with a lot of experience in their particular area, but maybe not a lot of experience in some of the ways that we think that we've been helpful in the leadership academy here. So that growing number of criminal justice organizations I think is a big factor in what we're talking about.

Over the course of the development of our leadership academy, we really learned a lot about the issues surrounding leadership skills and the needs in the development, implementation, and revision of the academy itself. I'd suggest that there are kind of three pillars to this leadership concept, and certainly what we use as the curriculum. And that's the combination of personal leadership style, equity and data. These themes really came out of interviews with the first cohort of participants and a review of what are really current best practices in leadership development broadly and for government. And that's something that Jane, we've leaned heavily on you for that kind of research, and we really appreciate that.

Most importantly, we found that it was really impactful. The survey feedback was really quite positive, with a Net Promoter Score of 100%, meaning that every single participant would recommend the program to a friend. Two instances, participants were able to put to use the information right away, with one using the equity tools within hours of the session, and another using the data bias insights for every day after that session. It's really been a great experience, and again, the issues that we're going to talk about have been informative to that leadership academy development process. With that, I'll turn it back over to you, Jane.

Jane Wiseman:

Well, thanks Chris. And teeing up, the way we created, and collaborated, and really took the cohort one participants' feedback and shaped not only their feedback, but if you recall, we had conversations with the incoming cohort to ask them what were their priorities, what did they most need urgently to learn?

And when we came up with those three pillars, personal leadership style, equity, and data, I got to tell you the one that really was impactful for me and completely changed the kinds of questions I ask in my daily work was equity. The data thing has been my thing for a while, so that wasn't new as much, but we were so lucky to have such a rockstar facilitator for our conversations around bringing an equity lens to the leadership conversation. Latrina Kelly-James, who I know has been a great partner to NCJA for a while.

But the conversations we had really helped me reorient my thinking and just have new questions to constantly be asking. Who's not at the table but should be? What voices are left out but need to be part of the conversation? And are we having to do things differently so we don't unintentionally cause harm? These are the kinds of questions that have really helped shape some new ways of thinking for me.

And Chris, as a leader of an organization, you probably got as much out of those sessions as I did. Is there anything about your leadership style that's changing to think more about an equity lens as you lead your organization?

Chris Asplen:

Yeah, for sure. To say that I got a lot out of the sessions myself is an understatement. You're right. I mean, they were really impactful for me as well.

From an equity perspective specifically, I think one of the most important perspectives that I got out of those meetings, and also out of our association with Delrice Adams, who's the SAA in Illinois, who helps us on the NCJA Board of Directors Equity Committee, and she's been kind enough to speak at a number of our meetings. And she has this kind of guiding thought that's been very helpful to me, and that is always ask the people that you're impacting, right?

So when you're leading and you're making a policy, ask the people that are going to be affected by it the most. And that's really I think probably the safest way to ensure that you are in fact leading with an equity lens and doing everything that you can to make people feel like they are included, that it's an inclusive organization, that it's a diverse organization.

I'll add another concept that I think a lot about, and it's a corollary to equity. It's not just equity specific, but it's a corollary to that. And that's a concept that is kind of gaining a lot of notoriety these days called psychological safety. And there've been studies done out there about what makes organizations successful. And kind of off the charts, the dynamic which most contributes to an organization's success is that of psychological safety. In other words, are people comfortable when they fail? Is it okay to fail in an organization, and do you have the capacity to learn from that?

A friend of mine, Amy Edmondson, just published a book a couple of weeks ago called the Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well. And that really is kind of important, again, not just from an equity perspective, but everybody in the organization should feel safe in their ability to try new things, to not necessarily be perfect what they do, be accepted in that, and be coached and to how to do better. And that was really one of the most important lessons that I got out of that work.

I'd add that some of the other issues that we identified in our conversations were the issues of workforce retention. It's a huge issue, particularly in the criminal justice system. Obviously, law enforcement is plagued by difficulties in retention.

Leadership in a remote context. We'll talk a little bit more about communication, but leadership in a remote context is a very, very different thing. It has great advantages. We left, for example, NCJA, we went remote the year before covid hit. It wasn't right to be paying what we were paying for an office in Washington DC.

But more than that, it enabled us as an organization to attract talent from all over the country. And if I didn't have to try to convince someone to move to Washington DC to pick up their family and come to DC, not the quality, but the scope of individual that I could get with particular expertise and what we needed, I was much more likely to get it if I could look at the whole country.

So that's been a big advantage. But there are obvious disadvantages to working in a remote context. And the different expectations that come along with that, and the different needs that employees have

in that context, and the things that you need to do around work hours, and how you need to adjust to work hours, and how you need to adjust to things like flex time, and how you need to be sensitive to the fact that people, if they're working at home, they are going to take certain time off to take their kid to the doctors and things like that. And how do you maximize the benefits of remote work? At the same time, recognize that there are some dangers and some difficulties in terms of efficiency and effectiveness that come along with it.

So all really significant challenges that are relatively new to organizations and to their leaders. So how about you, Jane? What have you taken away from the last few years?

Jane Wiseman:

So in a word, burnout. You mentioned it, you did. You talked about employee retention. And when we did that survey at the start of cohort two, and we were just checking in on people, I think it was related to the managing stress conversation, I was shocked. 70% of our cohorts said they work evenings and weekends and never take an email free vacation. 70% have too little time for the things that bring them joy. Now, that was a gut punch for me. And 90% spend their day reacting to crises rather than being strategic, and proactive, and thinking long-term.

So those stats to me really echo what I'm seeing on a national scale in terms of burnout. And you know why? Because at the beginning of the pandemic, we were banging our pots, and singing, and celebrating, everyone but the public servants who showed up every day and did the work, sometimes more work for the same pay with fewer colleagues around. I worked with some vital records offices who were saying that in-person services, people were practically coming to fisticuffs over masks, not masks.

So my word for the last few years is burnout. And I'm so grateful that I got to be part of the Leadership Academy, which allowed people to recharge, to get away from the meeting schedule, from the desk, from the routine, because there's something about we all come back from vacation refreshed, because there's something about not being in your physical space and connecting to a community. And I am so grateful to have been able to help create that community for the essays, to the participants who came together.

We hear a lot about learning loss for children, and how the scores are down and so on. But it's not just children who missed out on in-person learning. I learned so much in the leadership academy. Part of it is the stuff that I learned from the facilitators, and presenters, and the content and the curriculum we put together. But another part of it is just that one-off conversation where you learn something, where you jump off the content that's presented, and go deeper, and learn from someone's experience. So I feel very grateful that we were able to give that space for people to recharge.

So Chris, how about you? What do you think not so much just the cohort of leaders that we were with, but in general, as you look out... Your job is national, you look across the whole field. When you see what the needs are out there of criminal justice leaders, not just in the SAA organizations, but in the criminal justice training councils, the coordinating councils, the organizations that are being funded by the SAAs out in the field, what are you seeing as the needs of leaders, managers in the criminal justice organizations?

Chris Asplen:

Yeah. So I think kind of to your observation, leaders, and managers, and supervisors like everyone else, they're looking for renewal. They're looking for a chance to reengage and to get excited about their work again. Particularly these days in criminal justice, it's hard sometimes to get excited, because of all the controversy over everything, and because of the extreme positions on everything, and because of

the media messages that get sent out there. Sometimes it's hard. A lot of times, it's hard to stay focused on what is fact-based, and what's really happening, and what we know is really happening, and what is impactful.

I'll tell you one thing I do. Whenever we hire someone, when we've made the offer and we're trying to establish a start date, I try really, really hard to get people to take some time off. I always say, "Hey listen, there aren't a whole lot of times in life when you get a fair stretch of time, where you get to take a vacation, and you really don't have to worry about anything."

Even when we take vacation now, if we're employed, none of us are not looking at our phones about work. None of us are able to really not worry about what's going on in the office, but this is the one time you can.

So I try really hard to say, "Take a couple of weeks. We'll survive without you until you come join us." And it's really hard. Honestly, I haven't been terribly successful.

Now, sometimes that has to do with benefits, and general financial considerations and such. But I try really hard to get people to join the organization already kind of charged up or recharged and ready to go.

But I think some of that also comes from education, while you're in an organization. And for example, as an attorney, I have to take CLEs every year to maintain my license. And you hope that the trainings are genuinely reinvigorating. They're not always, but that's us lawyers sometimes. But you hope that you can find some opportunities like that for continuing training.

I think they need time to step back and reflect, and I think that's really helpful. It was very helpful for me. One of the exercises that we did in the Leadership Academy was a reflection of the kind of ups and downs of my "leadership journey." And it wasn't until I was asked to do that and I began to think about it, that it really hit home for me that our perception oftentimes for leadership is that it is this linear course upwards, right? That it's this kind of straight line where you get a job, and you do well, and you become a leader. And then you take the next job, you do well and you become a leader. And then you join a bigger organization, or a more important organization, or whatever, and you keep going up.

And man, that is not the case. I think as any leader will really tell you if they think back and they realize the number of times that they've gone up a little bit, and then something's happened and then they've kind of dropped down, and then they've gone up and then dropped down. And when I say drop down, I don't necessarily even mean failed. Maybe there's been something in their personal life, or there's been something, a career change of course that they pursue, but it's not the linear thing that we kind of perceive leadership might be. And I think that's really important to look at, and take ownership of, and be okay with, if you will.

I think that those are some of the really important lessons that I learned about what is needed these days for leaders. Again, in a community and in a dynamic that's really, really challenging, and that's how they come to make a difference I think.

Speaking of making a difference, you and I, we both got to work with two leaders who I think really have an amazing legacy in the field of criminal justice. And I was really, really proud to work with Janet Reno and Jeremy Travis. I thought they were tremendous leaders. And so I'll just ask you to reflect on your experience with those two leaders.

Jane Wiseman:

Well, thank you Chris. It's fun to reminisce about the good old days. And I will say as far as Attorney General Reno is concerned, I can say she was a giant in the field, and you and I both know she was physically a tall person.

But the three things that I remember about her leadership style was number one, she set a tone by doing her homework. I mean, that woman, she would go home with a big binder and she read it all right? If we did prep materials for her for a meeting, she dug into every detail. She knew the facts, she knew the data, she knew it. And she was so sharp. So she set a tone that we had to do our homework. I mean, there was no showing up at a meeting with her without having done your homework, because if she had the time to do it, we certainly did. So I liked that about her.

Second thing I noticed about her leadership style was that she had structure. There were rules and processes, the get back memo, and then the meeting briefing memo. There were all these tools that she used to simplify process.

I've read that President Obama only wore blue suits or gray suits, because he didn't have to spend time every morning wondering is it going to be purple, or green, or turquoise day, right? If you simplify processes, it allows you to focus more on substance.

And so I found that with Attorney General Reno, was that she could focus on substance because she wasn't always trying to figure out what's the format of this or that.

And then finally, and I think probably most meaningful, is that she really had core principles and she stuck to them. And she was a principled moral leader. And we really got to dive into some of that moral leadership in the Leadership Academy, how to stay true to yourself when you're making difficult decisions. And the case study wasn't one of her, but we certainly could have used her for that. And that's something that I really admire about her.

And then of course, just the fact that she was all that accomplished, and amazing, brilliant, great leader, and a warm, kind person. So I literally looked up to her for many, many reasons.

But anyway, Chris, your relationship with her was different. I was like the kid sitting at the little kids' table, but you were the expert on DNA who came in to advise her on something that was so important to her. So what was it like for you coming in that role, and were there things that you learned from her as a leader?

Chris Asplen:

I'll say that if I ever wrote a book on leadership, it would be entitled Everything I Ever Learned about Leadership I Learned from Janet Reno. She really was that good. And the best way to probably explain it would be by example.

As you mentioned, it was the beginning of the DNA days, and we were just beginning to understand what the potential of DNA was. We were also beginning to understand what the tragedy of not leveraging the potential of DNA was. And that had to do with the issue of rape kits and untested rape kits. Our commission counted through the Police Executive Research Forum, we tried to get an accounting of how many rape kits were sitting untested in police department storage facilities.

And we realized it was hundreds of thousands. And now that we had this database, it didn't make sense not to test them anymore, because now we had potential suspects in a database. Before, it made sense. You didn't have a suspect, don't test. But if you have a database, test.

So we came up with an idea to create a pilot funding project wherein we would outsource those rape kits to a private laboratory. And so when you have those opportunities with the Attorney General, you

realize you have a small period of time, and by small I mean about three minutes. When you have that morning meeting and you're presenting an idea, I had my speech down to three minutes to the word, literally to the word, as I should.

And so I start my pitch, and I go through it, and I start to explain the dynamic. And I'm about halfway through it, and she politely raises her hand to kind of quiet me, and she says, "So in other words, the sooner we test the rape kits, the sooner the rapes stop." And I literally was stunned at the clarity of her understanding, and the vision, and the decision-making process that occurred immediately thereafter where she leaned over to her assistant, and they kind of whispered at each other, whatever. And the next day, we had about a \$50,000 pilot program to outsource and test rape kits.

The decision was that quick. It was that definitive. And I'll tell you, later on, that pilot program grew into a larger funding project, which grew into legislatively initiated work, which is now called the Debbie Smith Act, which now has spent over a billion dollars to test rape kits because of her going, "Yep, I get it, and let's move on it."

The other example I would use with Ms. Reno was our final meeting... Our final commission meeting, I should say, was a meeting at the Kennedy School of Government where we brought in a lot of big experts like Dr. James Watson and such. There was a Q&A after her session with Dr. Watson and after her speech. And one of the questions, one of the students asked about what other countries were doing with forensic DNA databases, and how were we in line with those other countries, etc., etc.

And she stopped for a second and she said, "Boy, that's a really great question, but I am probably not the best person to answer that question. Is Mr. Asplen here somewhere?" And of course, I was sitting pretty close. "Mr. Asplen, would you answer that question?"

And to me, aside from being stunned and shocked, it was she didn't need to be the center of attention for one. For two, she respected that student enough to make sure that student had the right answer, not her answer. And she's smart. She could have danced all around it. Any decent politician could have gotten an answer out, but that's not the way she worked. Data mattered, facts mattered to her. And that's what always drove her decision-making process. So those are my two lessons, and I was really, really fortunate to be a part of her Department of Justice. So how about Jeremy Travis? What were your memories about Jeremy Travis?

Jane Wiseman:

Well, Chris, I guess I'll say about what you said about Attorney General Reno, which is I just feel so lucky to have been there in that magical moment with Jeremy. He was about as great a boss as anyone could ask for. And like Ms. Reno, he was a visionary. He wasn't thinking about today and tomorrow. He was really thinking about legacy and that moment of trying to invest more in DNA technology, invest more in, as you say, the processing of the rape kits. He had that ability to clarify. And he was very good at persuading. He would say things so eloquently.

But as a boss, what I think I most valued was how well he listened. And he was so patient. Gosh, I mean, I've always been impatient, and I've tried to learn that from him, and I'm still working on it. But he was a busy guy, and yet when I came to him with a problem or a question, he was so patient listening to me, it was as if solving my little problem was the only thing that mattered in the world. And I have to say, I have always valued that in him.

And the other thing that I really admired and I try to emulate, I'm still working on it, is that he as a communicator could really understand the chess board of who's involved, and what were their priorities, and how to succeed. And in the leadership academy, we had that stakeholder mapping

activity that I think really, I should do it again, and again, and again, because it is about trying to understand what are the allegiances, and how do we move the ball forward, and how do we get our strategy aligned with whoever it is that's making decisions.

And so that was another one of the things that I admired. There are about a million things that I admire about Jeremy, and we could spend the whole rest of this podcast talking about them, not least of which is that as an SAA, I hired some people who had worked for Jeremy. And of course, we now know that Nancy La Vigne was someone that Jeremy hired, and was now at NIJ and Amy Solomon. So Jeremy's good in many ways, including as someone who hires. Present company excluded, I will say he hires wonderful people.

So your relationship with Jeremy was different than mine, because I was the sort of fresh out of grad school kid who was brought in to do management and operations and budget stuff, but you were brought in as an expert. So what about his leadership style impressed you?

Chris Asplen:

I would describe Jeremy's leadership as in some respects, kind of the classic leadership style of having a real vision, communicating that vision well. And then simply, or sometimes not so simply, but hiring good people, communicate that vision, and then get out of their way. He really, really empowered his staff to do what he asked them to do, and he didn't get in their way.

Listening to you though, it reminds me that he was also one of those people who their ability to listen and their willingness to listen, and thus he's not always the talker in the room, and almost kind of a more quiet leader. You forget that behind all of that is literal brilliance. I mean, just his intellectual heft was amazing.

On top of that, his background was really helpful for that position too. Because remember, he came from the New York Police Department. And imagine how politically savvy, and I mean small P politically savvy you need to be in that arena in order to be successful as well.

I'm always aware that the leaders who are the quiet, empowering leaders, are quiet and empowering out of a sense of security, and wisdom, and intellectual heft that gives them the ability to turn things over to other people.

Jane Wiseman:

Good point, Chris. These two titans in our field that we just spoke of are the kind of people who might be the smartest one in the room, but they don't have to act like it and make me feel dumb, right? They're able to give power to others through their leadership style, which is just amazing.

So when I left NIJ, I went to an organization that required two weeks every year of training. And they boasted that the only organization in the world that invests more in its people is the US military. So that got me kind of on this path of expecting to invest time in self-development.

And then when I became an SAA, I got there and was in this routine of getting lots of training. And my training budget was exactly zero. So I had to cobble together, and I found some budget to let people go to some trainings and conferences, and came across a statistic recently that broadly speaking, in public and private sector organizations, the average number of training hours per employee per year is about 60. So not quite the 80 hours I had when I was at my old firm, but a whole lot more than the zero hours I had to give as an SAA.

So there's a lot of online stuff out there that people could do for free during their workday. And do we need in-person training? She says provocatively. So Chris, what do you think?

Chris Asplen:

I really think we do. I really think we do. Listen, the research shows that leading, communicating, and motivating others are among the hardest skills to learn, and those are the most difficult to do online as they take practice, and role playing, and feedback to reach mastery.

The other thing is that so much of communicating is not just looking at a person's face. And that makes the leadership in a remote context complex as well. So much of communicating is not what we say, but how we say it. It's body language, it's context, it's all these things. And so learning to do that in person, the research is pretty clear about, is really, really important.

Some recent Harvard Business School research shows that a lot of professional development focuses on skills like strategy development and analysis, and under emphasizes the "rational communication" and effective skills. They're really, really needed in today's environment, and that demand in-person workshop style training. There's research on many of the different ways we learn, from hands-on activities, to kinesthetic exercises, to drawing, to speaking and role play. But generally, there's very little we retain when we learn in the "sage on the stage," dynamic. Listening to a lecture just isn't the best way to learn and not the best way to retain, certainly not the best way to adopt. We need to be engaged to fully retain what we learn, and it's just too hard to do that well online. Things are getting more interactive, but beyond short bursts of a couple hours here and there, it's really hard for most of us to be fully present to a screen, particularly when more and more, even as many of us return back to an office, we're still going to forever more spend more time on screen than we did before the pandemic. So it's just going to be another amount of time on screen, hard to differentiate from the staff meeting you had an hour before, when you need to be really engaged to learn something, contrasted with the other five meetings you had that particular day.

I'll also add that in a survey of private sector employees, 63% think in-person is the "richer" and more effective method of learning compared to online. I'll also add personally to the NCJA Leadership academy, the comments from the evaluations and the interviews was that there are no other place to be with your peers, and also the role play case study stuff that you can't do on Zoom. And so that personal connectivity to your peers was just really, really important.

And also, to be clear, we do some part of the academy online as well, so we mix it up a lot. But that's not a substitute for being across the table from your colleague.

Jane Wiseman:

I completely agree. I mean, as an SAA, there were thousands of other employees in the state of Massachusetts, but not one person had a job like mine. And until you get to be around the table with other professionals who have a similar set of responsibilities, a similar... Well of course the saying you know one SAA, I know we all have different grants that we manage. But to have the same kinds of responsibilities, it is just powerful to have that peer group.

And of course some of the things that we did like that walk around the room looking at images as part of that first exercise in the equity piece, you can't do that on Zoom, that personal experience of observing photographs and thinking about situations. The other thing, when we did the skits, which were powerful as a learning tool, you can't really do an improv skit when you're on Zoom quite as well.

Chris Asplen:

So as kind of a closing question, what can every listener do today or this week to advance their professional development and growth as a leader?

Jane Wiseman:

Well Chris, I'm going to go back to what you said about Jeremy. He had a great vision. And I think for any of us, whatever job we're in, whether we're leading an organization, whether we're leading a team, or whether we're just leading ourselves, what's that saying? If you don't know where you're going, you might end up somewhere else. I think the most important thing everyone can do after listening to this podcast is to really think about their vision for their current role, their future role, their life in general.

So number one is just get clarity. Because the more clarity we have, the easier it will be to then line up, "Well okay, now that I know I want to go there, what are the steps?" And then just make incremental progress on the way.

One of the things that I like to do whenever I have a goal is to just wander into the bookstore. There are those things that are attached to cafes. So bookstore, library, whatever. And go into the section of leadership or personal development, whatever it is. Go to the section of books, and just pick a couple of things, and just start leafing through them to get ideas. That's one thing that I do. The other thing I do is talk to people who have cool jobs or who are doing more of the kind of thing I want to learn how to do.

So those are the two things I think people can do right away. And of course, there's always sign up for a leadership program, or an online course. There are lots of things people can do. How about you, Chris? What do you think our listeners should do next?

Chris Asplen:

I think the most important thing that a leader can do, and it doesn't take a lot of training. All it takes is intentionality, let's say that. And I think particularly in this context, particularly in the challenged community that we have right now, I think the most important thing a leader can do is draw the connection between what our staffs and our employees are doing to the end goal. Because that's what inspires people. Again, particularly in our community. And sometimes it's really hard to do, and sometimes I think we need to help our folks do that.

And I had to jump through a lot of mental hoops in my own career. I started life off as a prosecutor. And one thing about prosecutors is we do it because we love attention. We trial attorneys, we love attention. And we love that immediate gratification of a guilty from a jury. And that's our dopamine hit. And it's hard to get past that when that's the way you identify yourself.

And I had to do a lot of mental gymnastics as I began to take leadership roles in organizations to draw a connection to what I was doing that wasn't necessarily in the courtroom, wasn't necessarily taking a pedophile off the street, but still was really important getting to that point.

I think one of the most important things we can do is help our staff recognize that if they're in the accounting department, that there's real tangible value to what they're doing in the process of the organization that gets us to the point of getting our invoices out, that gets our consultants paid, that those consultants help us do the work that we do. That ultimately down the line, literally tangibly saved somebody's life, or literally helps a victim who has had the worst thing that will ever happen to that person happen to them because of what's been done way, way, way upstream in some accounting department, or some grant writer's department, or some program manager's department. Somebody else's life is better because we choose to do this work. And I think that's one of the most important things we can do as leaders, is draw the connection between people's lives downstream to what we're doing in our daily lives.

With that, let me just say again, Jane, thank you so much. Not just for being here today. I always love talking to you. Really appreciate the opportunity. But for everything that you've done for us at NCJA and

the Leadership Academy, and we look forward to working with you in the future. So thank you very much, and thank you everyone out there for listening.

Jane Wiseman:

Thanks Chris, a pleasure to be with you today.