

WTC 'Pave Your Own Path' with Joycelyn Fankhouser

[00:00:00] **Christi Powell:** Hey, podcast world. This is Christi Powell again with Women Talk Construction. So glad to be here again. Um, on a Monday, which I know you're listening and our YouTube video is actually going to be published at the same time today. I have Angela Gardner, my co host on with me and another special guest.

Special guest, Jocelyn Fankhauser. She is the manager of the Boulder County Housing and Human Services for disaster. And we are so excited to talk to her about this non traditional role that we see females in and her success in it and how she is paving away by mentoring and supporting other women in the industry, but also all humans in the industry, right?

Male or female, all generations. She's been really instrumental in helping those figure out how to be in a role like hers so that she can retire someday and ski, even though she doesn't need to retire and ski. So Jocelyn, welcome. Um, we want to start off really quickly this morning by talking about something fun.

I've been watching your, your Facebook. I am so impressed by Luke and his ability to ski at the age of two years old and watching you teach him on Facebook has been the highlight of my year. Um, just being able to see his little face, like he, she's posted videos of him, like from stages, right? And now, you know, he's actually made it in this to see the expressions on his face all the way through from.

Being scared to now, you know, having this big grin on his face because he made it, um, has been really cool. And I know you as a grandma and as a good friend of mine, your heart's probably like exploding right now. You, you are an excellent skier. You've been skiing forever. I can't wait to ski with you on Saturday next week.

I get to be in Denver. And also, um, you've been teaching my oldest daughter who just moved to Denver, how to ski too. So tell us just a little bit about like the joy that you're receiving from teaching Luke how to ski.

[00:02:11] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** It is just the greatest joy of my life. You know, we taught all three of our girls how to ski.

And from the moment my daughter told me she was pregnant, I started collecting the gear and could not wait till the day that I could take him skiing. And he is so good at it and he loves it. So we've been going to a very small hill just out on the plains actually, and now we're going to be moving up to the big swing.

So it was the magic carpet and now he's very excited to go to the big, big mountain and go on the big swing. And I cannot wait.

[00:02:42] **Christi Powell:** That's awesome. What a great hobby too. Like if you've stayed in great shape and oh, I just think it's wonderful. Angela, do you have any hobbies? That you like really love to do and have been, you know, maybe consistent over the years or maybe something you just recently picked up.

[00:02:57] **Angela Gardner:** Yes. I have lots of hobbies and I do actually, I love to scale West, but today I want to highlight my hot yoga because I've gotten back into that now and it's really good for my body. So I'm very much enjoying it. What about you, Christi, hobbies?

[00:03:12] **Christi Powell:** So, um, I think probably my, I have to say outdoors because I can't really say one thing or the other.

I just love being in the woods. Like I love being in the woods. That is, that's my hobby. Like I like to hike. I like to bike. Um, my knee doesn't like it as much as I love to paddleboard. My knee doesn't love all those things as much as it used to, but I'm, I'm getting there. We're working on real physical activity.

So let's get into some of this really important topics that we need to talk about with all the disasters that we're having in our country right now. Having Jocelyn on has been a real highlight for Angela and I because this is a non traditional role, but it's also very educating to see how it works on the back end of a disaster.

And I think Jocelyn's seen it up front and personal in Boulder County. Um, because she's had several disasters, I would love to, typically I have a ton of questions for you, but I'd really like for you to just explain what your role is, how you got it. And the funnest thing to me is creating your own job description so that you could apply for it, even though you are already in it.

Um, I thought that was really interesting. So if you would just tell us a little bit about what you're doing and how you're doing it, you know, what you need to that, we would love to hear that. And I know our audience would too. Oh, yeah,

[00:04:31] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** thank you, Christi. Thank you, Angela. You know, I am in a really unique role and I started in Boulder County almost 30 years ago in child protection and at the 2013 flood.

I live in Lyons, Colorado, which is a very small town of 2,000 people, and we were affected by the flood. Um, I actually couldn't live in my home for four months because we had no utilities here. So I had to live in Boulder. And when the flood happened, the mayor of Lyons is a dear friend of mine. She was in Africa working and called and said, We don't have any human services stuff.

You're in charge. Like, wait, what? What are you talking about? And then back up. She's like, are my parents? Okay. Who live, you know, across the street. Yes. Your parents are fine. Fast forward about a week. I just started jumping in because that's who I am. Always trying to help my community, always trying to help others.

Just started asking questions, learning. What the services were that were out there. And what I learned very quickly is that there are a lot of local services that were just pivoting already. Organizations that work with human services were adding additional ways that they could help. So I just started doing and, and helping my own community and figuring out ways that I could really make sure everyone was getting the most that they could from FEMA, the most that they could from all of these services, we started getting really far ahead in Lyons.

A lot of the people that I talked to spoke to our director, Frank Alexander, and said, we want Jocelyn to do this. He's like, she's not qualified to do that. No. And they said, yes, we really want her. And so he said, okay, create a job description. So I created a job description. They put it out, you know, for other people to apply.

I was given the job, started doing that for Lyons. Then he came to me and said, we need you to do this for the rest of the county for a short period of time, we'll temporarily reassign you. And then we'll we'll reassign reassess at that point. Well, further down the road, there was actually a position within human services called the emergency manager emergency coordinator position, and it had been vacant numerous times.

What was happening is they would hire a coordinator and then they would work that job for a period of time. But then they leave and go on to a bigger job because they were trained in emergency management. Mm hmm. So I said, hey, I want to apply for this job. They said, oh no, you're not qualified for that.

I said, well, but I've been with the county for 15, 18 years at that point, you know, I'm not going anywhere. You're not gonna lose me. So they still said no. Well, four months later, the emergency coordinator they hired left again. So they came back and they said, okay, maybe, maybe you can learn this job. And that's what I did.

I just started learning everything I could. I found a really great mentor in the director and in the other coordinators in the office of disaster management and started taking FEMA classes, I could all of the free state classes, asking lots of questions and doing a lot of listening. Really building relationships across the county and then just started building the program and 10 years later.

Now, I'm a certified emergency manager. We have been fortunate or unfortunate in Boulder county to have 2 female declared events, lots of fires in between. We had a mass shooting event and then cobit, so I've got a lot of experience under my belt. Which a lot of emergency managers don't get in their careers.

So I kind of learned by fire,

[00:08:04] **Christi Powell:** right? I've heard your heart before and I, and I know your heart. How do you propose that you can get that kind of experience under the belts of those folks that are not experiencing all the different disasters that you've had to deal

[00:08:21] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** with? You know, I've talked to a lot of young emergency managers, particularly through the International Association of Emergency Managers, and it's mentoring and those young people also need to be flexible.

They need to be willing to go to a place that is more, say, hurricane prone, more wildfire prone. Where they're going to be in a place where they can get that experience with a disaster or volunteer with an organization on the side, like the Red Cross or the FEMA Corps, you know, you can volunteer with FEMA and go and deploy and get that experience.

So there are ways to do it, but not if you're just willing to stay in 1 place

[00:09:02] **Christi Powell:** after you. Yeah. That's a good point. Volunteer firefighting is a great idea, right? Yes. Volunteer fire and rescue volunteer. I was a volunteer firefighter at the refinery. That's how I met your husband. And that's how you became friends.

How many years ago? I can't even remember.

[00:09:18] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** Oh my God. I'm dating myself.

[00:09:20] **Christi Powell:** I know. No, we're not even going to talk about that right now. But yeah, I mean, there's so many ways that you can get experience and just the fact that, that you were able to just see a need and fill it. Right. I love that we're giving a whole bunch of girls that may be listening to our podcast.

We're trying to get it in schools. Now this conversation is allowing girls to see that they can create their own pathway just like you did. Absolutely. And a lot of times All it means is we've got to do our own homework. Just like you did ask the questions, find out what the need is, then find a way to meet the need.

And women are really good at that. I'm not saying men aren't, but women are really good at that. The, the women that I've met, um, especially in the last three and a half years, they're just good at paving a path because they see a need and they can fill a salute, they can find a solution for it and that's what you did.

I love that you never gave up when you were told over and over again, That you, you didn't qualify. Well, you qualified yourself. And that's what I want those, our listeners to hear. You can qualify yourself and Jocelyn did it. So thank you for sharing that with us.

[00:10:34] **Angela Gardner:** Do you know someone in the upstate of South Carolina suffering from substance use disorder?

[00:10:40] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** Favor Upstate

[00:10:41] **Angela Gardner:** is a recovery community resource center that provides a compassionate and innovative response to the suffering caused by substance use. Favor Upstate helps rebuild. Build lives, build families, and strengthen communities.

Recovery from Substance Use Disorder is a reality. For more information, visit Favor Upstate.

[00:11:15] **Christi Powell:** I think Angela's got a question for you as well. Well, I just

[00:11:19] **Angela Gardner:** wanted to say, you know, because of what you're doing, Jocelyn, Women can see that and they will, you will attract more to that. And I actually, I wanted to mention this real quick. Cause you'll like this too, but Christy, I saw the injury is an injury for your center where Jasper, uh, she's a firefighter, a young high school firefighter going to enter it.

He actually said that they have seen an increase by like a lot of women, the girls wanting to enter firefighting at that career center. A lot. He said, he said they were gonna, they were entering cosmetology and then they said, Oh no, I want to be a firefighter. Like

[00:11:57] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** that's cool.

[00:11:58] **Angela Gardner:** What you're doing is you're doing just what Jasper's doing.

You're showing women that they can do whatever they want. Yeah. And, um, my question then for you is kind of more. We want to hear about like in a direct experience, you know, that way our listeners can hear that, and women, if they are interested in it, but how did your firsthand experience of living through the 2013 nationally declared flood in Boulder County shape your understanding of disaster management?

How did that happen for you?

[00:12:28] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** You know, it was, it was really a unique experience because it was right post floods. So I'm learning what is FEMA, you know, and one of the biggest lessons that I learned from the flood and moving forward is that everyone has a perception that FEMA is going to come in and fix everything.

Yeah. That's not their role. FEMA's role is to come in and help the locals with what programs they have and supplement them with some. amount of aid, whether it be, whether it be for your infrastructure, your public side, like your road that was destroyed or your individual side, which is the individual assistance for your home.

The limits on what FEMA can help you with are very small. And so the most important piece in emergency management, in my opinion, is the preparedness.

If a person is underinsured, FEMA is not going to come in and make you whole. It's their job to come in and just temporarily give you what you need, maybe to repair your house or give you a little bit of money if you aren't insured to help you, but it's not their job to make you whole.

And that's a misperception. And so I have felt very strongly. Throughout all the work that I've done since then to help people understand that they need to be prepared. And that's my part of my role. It is to help them be prepared because then when I have to respond with sheltering, they're better prepared and I have less people I have to serve.

That's so smart. So you

[00:14:03] **Angela Gardner:** go out in the community and talk about this. Correct. Ahead of time. Before.

[00:14:09] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** Yeah. And it's not all my role. You know, there are other people who do a lot of it, but even just in day to day conversations that I have with people, I find it very important for them to understand that, you know, insurance was a really good example.

Most people are very underinsured. Yeah. And it's important to be insured and to understand your insurance because most people don't. Yeah. They don't. And that was one of my biggest lessons is just figuring out what are some of those things that people can do ahead of time to make the impact less when a disaster happens.

[00:14:44] **Christi Powell:** So smart. Well, I'm going to take a little side twist here for a second. One of the conversations you and I had. that literally settled with me, like won't go away in my brain. And that happens to me once in a while. And then some things never say, so I don't know, I can't figure it out. But one of the things that we talked about was all of the folks that are coming over the border and how many of them are landing in Colorado.

So one of the questions I wanted to ask you kind of goes along with this. But I want to hear, I want our audience to hear how are you handling that influx of people? And maybe you're not handling it yet because it's kind of new, right? Like there's tons of people and you just don't know what to do with them yet, but you had some really great ideas or maybe they weren't even ideas.

They were, this is going to be a challenge. And we're going to have to figure it out kind of thing. I'd love for you to share just a little bit about that because

you're not the only county that's probably dealing with this right now. So I think our listeners would love to hear how do I deal with this?

How can I help? Which I think is the most important thing, right? Is that if our country knows what's going on and they know there's a need and they can help, I think by you sharing facts that, that I didn't know about until you and I had a conversation, I think that would be helpful.

[00:16:02] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** Yeah, you know, it was a really big challenge when it first started happening.

So one thing that we do across Colorado is we provide mutual aid to each other. I co chair the North Central Region, which is the Front Range Region Recovery Committee, and we all communicate, share, and look at best practices. Well, the influx started coming to Denver. They started getting buses of a thousand people a day from Southern Texas, and they didn't know what to do.

So, yeah, So, 1 of the things that they do is they activated the human services department in conjunction with their department of, um, emergency management. And they started housing people much in the same way that we shelter people during a disaster. Just in a, in a slightly different way. For a slightly different reason, actually, the challenge with that is that there's no end state.

So when we have a disaster, we shelter people during the evacuation period, people are evacuated. Some people are impacted longer term, and then the evacuations are lifted and most of those people get to go home. In this case, you have thousands of people coming every week, every month, every day. And how do you continue to shelter them for a period of time?

Transcribed For how long? And then how do you offer those services in order for them to be able to be in the country legally? Most of the people, I'd say 99 percent of the people who are coming to Denver are from Venezuela. And they are fleeing a country where it's a very bad situation, dangerous. It's very dangerous.

They're coming. It takes them four or five months of walking through the jungle. Some of them with their children, with families, and they land in Southern Texas. They get put on a bus because Southern Texas can't handle all of those people. So they're busing them to sanctuary cities, primarily Chicago, New York, and Denver.

Then Denver is looking at, okay, how many of them can we help? What do you want? They offered 50 percent of them. We had about, we've had to date 40,000 people come 20,000 of them have wanted to get a bus ticket to another place. So they were provided that. And then the other 20,000, they're helping them.

Through that paperwork to apply for asylum. So when they come across the border, sometimes they're given their paperwork there and then they have to show up for a hearing, but they can't work for a period of time. They can't work until they get that work permit. So, um, one of the greatest things that I've seen is the boots on the ground and just the, the moms in neighborhoods are stepping up and the nonprofits, the churches are all helping most of them.

Thank you.

[00:18:45] **Christi Powell:** So that's how our country can help, right? The listeners that are listening to this podcast, get involved with your local associations that are helping these folks get their feet on the ground and get moving. And I love that you say that, that these moms are really like the boots on the ground and you know, we can't stand to see little kids.

Looking like they have no food. I don't care who they are, what they look like, how much money they have. Moms cannot stand that. It's not something we can go to sleep with that vision on our, on our minds. But thank you for sharing that. That is truly a disaster that you don't think of as a disaster, right?

You, you wouldn't think of as a disaster, but the fact that you have to treat it as an, a disaster, but it's a disaster that doesn't end. And that is the complication that you're coming up with. Thank you for sharing that. I thought it was really interesting just because I don't live in that world, right? I don't understand.

The challenges and I think it would be so nice if our media would cover more of this. Things that we really need to know and learn so that we can make our country better instead of things that don't even matter. Like I, I don't even watch the news because I, I, I feel like I say the same thing over and over and over again.

Right. And half the time, I don't know if I want to go along with any of it. So, so one last question. Unfortunately, we can't talk forever. And I'll let Angela ask this one and then we'll, we'll wrap it up.

[00:20:15] **Angela Gardner:** Well, I was just going to ask this, I was just going to ask her to share with us all the organizations that she interacts with, because I think that would be just really cool to hear just all the places you do and then end it with the organization that you got certified with, because, you know, maybe some of our listeners might be interested.

[00:20:33] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** So share with us that, you know, there are so many partners that we work with. Starting at the top with, like, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, almost all of our churches have a, have a non profit arm. Catholics have Catholic charities, Lutherans, Lutheran Family Services, the Mormon Church, every single one of them does.

And the list is really long. And then, of course, our local non profits, like EFFA and Our Center and Sister Carmen. Those are our three big in Boulder County. That provides services to our locals, and there's no reason to recreate the wheel in trying to find the people who are most vulnerable when human services is already working with them.

And that's why I think it's so important that an emergency manager be embedded in a human services department to partner with the office of emergency management. And that field is growing, growing right now. And I got my certification through the international association of emergency managers. I did that after I got certified by the state of Colorado a year before that.

And it's a pretty rigorous process of documenting what you've done and all of the work and partnerships that you have done in the past. And you have to recertify every five years. So I got that certification this last year at their conference. And I'm very excited because their conference this year is going to be in Colorado.

Broadmoor. So I'm very excited. I'm hoping to speak at that conference. Oh,

[00:22:07] **Christi Powell:** nice. Oh, I would love to see you too. So definitely send us the information that you're going to be

[00:22:11] **Joycelyn Fankhouser:** speaking. I would love to see

[00:22:13] **Christi Powell:** that. So tell us a little bit about how our audience can help you. Most of our listeners, 70 percent are leaders and owners of companies.

So if they were interested in supporting you in any way, supporting Boulder County, supporting emergency management services, how would they go about doing that and finding you to be able to do

[00:22:34] **Joycelyn Fankhauser:** that? Well, you can find me on LinkedIn, Jocelyn Fankhauser, my name, and I think we will add that. And you can always reach me through my email at work, jfankhauser at bouldercounty.

gov. And those partnerships with construction owned companies are essential in recovery as well. Yes. Yes. In recovery so much, um, we are still actively recovering from the Marshall fire, which we had 1100 homes that burned down a couple of years ago in an urban neighborhood. It was a freak fire at a time of year that we typically don't have fire that burned because of 120 mile an hour winds.

And many times construction companies will help those that are vulnerable. Those that are low income, those that don't have the ability to recover on their own were underinsured to rebuild by offering, you know, their assistance with maybe a set of free windows or help with the roof. You know, many organs at the realtors association jumped in and donated a thousand dollars per family if you qualify.

So those partnerships can be essential during that moments of recovery.

[00:23:47] **Christi Powell:** Nice. Thank you so much for sharing today and for being on. And we just wish you the best of luck, prayers for you and everything that you do every day impacting your county. And I just, I just can't get over how big of an impact that you've made in such a short period of time in your role.

And, and I love that. And those that are listening, Remember, even if you're new, you're, you're in high school, you're in college, you don't know where you're going. You don't know what you're doing. You can pave your own path. Yeah. And Jocelyn's just one of the many women that we've had on this, uh, on podcast and men that have paved their own path.

And don't be afraid, just do it and ask a lot of questions and learn a lot. And you can be anything that you want to be. You can see it. You can be it. So thank you again, Jocelyn for being on today. We appreciate you.

[00:24:36] **Joycelyn Fankhauser:** Thank you. I appreciate you both.

[00:24:42] **Christi Powell:** Well, that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk Construction Podcast with your hosts, Christy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next time.