

Jodi Willis - ILLUMINATION Interview

Thomas [00:00:00] Welcome, everybody, to another conversation as part of the ILLUMINATION project of the Springfield History Museum. Today, I'm really glad to be here with Jody Willis. My name is Thomas. I'm the story collector for this project this year, and we are co-leading this initiative with Mimi Nolledo, our photographer, and Aimee Yogi, our consultant. Jody, I'm so glad to be here with you. How are you today?

Jodi Willis [00:00:20] Good, thank you.

Thomas [00:00:21] Good. Well, I just love getting to talk with you because you have this energy and the zest to communicate. And I think that's really exciting for me as an interviewer. And I know that you have a background with adoption, and with an organization called Bertha Holt--

Jodi Willis [00:00:37] Holt International Adoption Agency.

Thomas [00:00:39] Holt International Adoption Agency. And it also is named after the same Bertha Holt, for which there's an elementary school named after her in Eugene. And so can I hear a little bit about your background? I know that's vague, and broad.

Jodi Willis [00:00:55] Yes, thank you. So I am the second child that my parents adopted through Holt International. My older sister's from South Korea. And then, from my understanding, the fall of Saigon was happening. And my mother said Holt called them. They had been praying for a second baby and she hadn't gotten pregnant yet. And Holt International called them and said, "Hey, we've got 25 babies on their way to America with no homes. Well, you've already gone through the home study program. Would you be interested?" And they said yes.

Thomas [00:01:34] Wow. And this is 1975?

Jodi Willis [00:01:34] Mm hmm. May of 1975. So I was born in March. So, they're preparing. They had no-- normally the procedure is, through adoption, you get a photo of the baby, there's a little bit of a background. And my parents had no idea. They said they had no idea what I looked like. They didn't know if I was, I mean, you know, with the way the war was, she didn't know if I was half Black, half-- you know, if I was a half baby, they had no idea. They just said yes. So I should have arrived at the beginning of May. But I got ill with another baby. And so Hawaii was a stop for a lot of, from what I've been reading about Operation-- so it's called Operation Babylift.

Thomas [00:02:26] Wow.

Jodi Willis [00:02:27] Which was getting all the babies out of Vietnam.

Thomas [00:02:28] Right.

Jodi Willis [00:02:30] And it was more than just that. I mean, I thought it was just a small little thing that Holt had the only ones who were sponsored. But I actually belong to a Operation Babylift group on Facebook, which I'm pretty silent on just because, you know. But, you know, but you had to answer questions, it's a private group to a certain extent. But through this Facebook page, I realized it was all over the United States and Australia and New Zealand.

Thomas [00:03:00] Wow.

Jodi Willis [00:03:01] Yeah. So it was worldwide. And these organizations got together and they brought these babies. Brought them in. So anyway, I was told I was on the last flight that Holt had flying out of Vietnam. Like, you're on it. And so another baby and I were on, and that flight in Hawaii was a stop for a lot of refueling and feeding. And there was a lot of dehydration, which I believe is what our problem was, was dehydration. So even though we should have been back, it should have been pretty early in May, I didn't come until the end because I was so sick. I had to stay back for two weeks. And my mom tells me that when it was time for her to come to finish the flight, one of the babies died.

Thomas [00:03:49] Oh, wow.

Jodi Willis [00:03:50] And they didn't know which one it was.

Thomas [00:03:52] Oh, no.

Jodi Willis [00:03:52] So it was really sad. But it wasn't me.

Thomas [00:03:55] I think I read that as they were doing this Operation Babylift, these flights were going out and the adults who part of them were assigned ten babies to take care of, and make sure they got to their destination. Right?

Jodi Willis [00:04:07] Right. They had a first flight--.

Thomas [00:04:10] An immense responsibility. And then the airport was going to be destroyed afterward.

Jodi Willis [00:04:13] It had already been bombed. Well, the first flight they had, I want to say, was the beginning of April. It actually crashed because it was a cargo plane, and they had taken boxes and the straps were going through the holes of the boxes. And that's how they strapped the kids in. And that one, later they found out it wasn't anything against the North, that the North Vietnam army didn't do anything. It was just a fluke of nature or whatever. But that airplane crashed. And many children and embassy workers and volunteers were all, you know, on the way to get back to United States. They had died. So that's when they decided to charter--

Thomas [00:04:59] So then the very next day, is that the flight that you were on? Okay. But then there was another flight of of folks on a not a cargo plane, but a passenger plane. The very next day. I have to imagine the fear.

Jodi Willis [00:05:10] Oh, yeah. And that's why Holt decided, that's why they got Pan Am to help them charter an actual passenger plane. And that's how that started, after that crash. So there was a passenger plane, and they actually had seats. Actually, there's the Pan Am museum that has a feature they did. Unfortunately I wish I had been able to go, but I couldn't, not too long ago. They have a whole museum about how they helped.

Thomas [00:05:39] We don't talk about competing museums. We don't give any attention or shine.

Jodi Willis [00:05:43] Let's put it in like-- it's in New York.

Thomas [00:05:45] Alright. And so you were raised by parents who weren't Asian, is that right?

Jodi Willis [00:05:52] Nope, my mom's Caucasian, my dad's half-Hispanic, half-Caucasian. So, yes.

Thomas [00:05:55] Yeah, wow. That's such a little, you know, I hate to say melting pot. You know, there's so much representation just in that family unit. And do you have siblings? Yes. So, my older sister is from Korea, then I am from Vietnam. And then my younger sister, I call her homegrown because she's their biological. And then we have our younger brother who is also adopted from Korea. But they're not blood-related. None of us are blood-related.

Thomas [00:06:20] Ad so when you came to the U.S., where did you live, initially?

Jodi Willis [00:06:24] Springfield. Carter Lane. And then really grew up, pretty much. Actually, my sister and her husband live in the house that we grew up in.

Thomas [00:06:34] In what part of Springfield?

Jodi Willis [00:06:37] Off of Jasper Road.

Thomas [00:06:39] Off Jasper Road, rock on. Wow. And so have you ever lived anywhere, else or have you pretty much kind of, your roots down here?

Jodi Willis [00:06:47] My husband was in the military, so we lived in Oak Harbor, Washington, and then 29 Palm--.

Thomas [00:06:51] The U.S. military, of course.

Jodi Willis [00:06:52] Yes, yes. He's Caucasian. He went to Marist High School. He's, yeah, he's a white boy.

Thomas [00:06:57] Uh huh. Alright. I mean, for me, being raised by a white parent and an Asian mom, you know, I've always had some interesting experiences, you know, with people being like, "that's your son?" Or "that's your mom?", or you know, "that's your dad?" Probably a little bit of that in your upbringing, I imagine?

Jodi Willis [00:07:17] Oh yeah, I think one time someone we had-- Jason was getting out of the military. So I had gotten to come home early and we decided where we're going to go. And I said, We're going to go back home. So we got a little old place in Springfield and the movers like asked, because he met my parents. He goes, Can I ask you a personal question? I was like, Sure. He goes, Are you adopted? I said, Oh, yeah, white lady, half Hispanic makes Asian, didn't you know? I said Yes, I am. I mean, he wasn't mean and I wasn't cruel either about it. It was like a, hey, ask instead of just speculate. Yeah.

Thomas [00:07:57] Right. I think when people think about adoption, they have often, at least a societal negative perception. You know, there's concern. And some of it, I'm sure, is real. That that child won't feel like they're truly a part of the family, or that they're somehow an asterisk on whether they're fully a part of the family. Do you have any

experiences with that, or do you think there's, like, a positive side to that whole thing, too? Because it's obviously not all negative. It's beautiful.

[00:08:30] It is. I can personally say, and I believe that my older sister and my younger brother would also say that as crazy as every mother and father are, my parents never had favorites. We were treated equally. Actually, if anybody's a favorite, it's my brother because he's the only boy, and he's the youngest. And he's the favorite because we all treat him like he's the favorite. And he's a wonderful man. But no, I have to say, my parents were fantastic. Because we went to a small church that's somewhat in existence on Main Street towards Thurston. There is a lot of families in that church who actually ended up adopting because my parents had. And we're 7 to 10 years older than a lot of the kids that were adopted, and we hung out together and I babysat them and even as they grew up, I have somewhat, still a relationship with some of them. And they did not have good upbringings, and some of it had to do with not being accepted. And other things had nothing to do with the color of their skin, it's just because every family's messed up. So.

Thomas [00:09:49] Hmm. Families are really hard.

Jodi Willis [00:09:50] Yeah, there is no perfect.

Thomas [00:09:51] I come from a pretty dysfunctional one, too.

Jodi Willis [00:09:54] Yeah, you know every family is dysfunctional, there's just levels. Yeah, but I can say personally say that my parents loved each and every one of us equally. We never felt, if anything, maybe my sister who's not adopted, maybe actually got the-- because she was the only not Asian-faced child. I always told her, I said, You have white privilege, so I don't know what you're talking about! But I think she may have felt a little, like different. Like we could always say, there's a recording my dad had, like how we we came in an airplane. Like, we came in an airplane. And she'd go, I came from mommy's tummy. That didn't matter. But then she goes, one day she said, I came from a helicopter. She just had to make up something else.

Thomas [00:10:44] Changes over time.

Jodi Willis [00:10:44] Yeah, because at least it was somewhat equal.

Thomas [00:10:49] Yeah, that's classic. It's like my dad would tell stories about, just like, you know, the crane machine where you get the toys and stuff. And because he was on a winning streak, you know, and so we would tell people we got eight in a row. And then years go by. Remember that time we got 15 in a row? Remember when we got 18 toys in a row out of that?

Jodi Willis [00:11:06] Mm hmm.

Thomas [00:11:06] I also think something that's interesting with families, at least from my own Japanese-American perspective, I was watching a documentary last night. And it happened to be-- this is going to be a tangent, but it's gonna come back. Maybe Aimee's familiar with this, kind of public versus private-- there's honne versus tatemae. This is something I learned in the documentary last night. They were speaking specifically about the sumo world. And how there was some corruption exposed, and the matches were rigged in the '80s. And this was a revelation to people, because some people didn't believe

that that was true. But in Japan, there's such a distinct concept between, the tatemae is, sometimes you create an artificial story of what's going on And the honne is the truth behind it. So the tatemae for the sumo situation was that these matches were all being fought fairly. The honne behind it is, well, there's like a little wink, wink, nudge, nudge behind it. And you know that there's actually some fixing going on, or whatever. And I think that can be true, at least in my perspective, in the family. You know, you put up the image of the family being the most-- we all present it as best as we can, in the Asian community. And sometimes with what's going on behind the scenes, there's a disconnect.

Jodi Willis [00:12:32] Yup.

Thomas [00:12:35] So, is there anything from what I just said that connects to something interesting you want to talk about?

Jodi Willis [00:12:40] Well, no, but it's true. I mean, like, you can be married for X amount of years, and you just had this huge fight in the car on the way to church. And so then the whole family shuffles in and they're sitting next to each other. But then 5 minutes ago, you were having a yelling match. But yet, to the church and the congregation, you came in, you sat together as a family. They have no idea what happened. But it's what's in the heart and in the mind. And at least, because you're a family, you know, we arrive as a family. And we worship as a family. And that doesn't always happen, but it's, it's a grounding. It's an accountability that it's not just me. This is, I'm a mother. I'm a wife. I'm a coworker, you know, and I choose to be obligated to these people. And so, yeah.

Thomas [00:13:37] I'm curious about growing up in the church with your family, you know, because I didn't grow up in a church with my family. I came into it a little bit independently and have been in and out. But I have to imagine that that sense of community, you know, in a relatively small area, a small town, Springfield, Oregon. What was it like for you being a part of the church in your family?

Jodi Willis [00:13:59] We were, you know, it's so funny because my grandparents on my mom's side, we call 'em old school Nazarene. So we couldn't go, you know, they don't believe in dancing or gambling or drinking or anything like that. And my mom didn't follow that to the tee, like when we had our prom dresses, we just could show Grandma the pictures... after prom. We couldn't show her our dress before. And just, little things. But I look at it back now and I see it's, that was just being respectful to her. It wasn't that we were hating. It was like, we're weren't going to change certain things. My mom has chosen a different lifestyle, and a different type of way of believing. It didn't make her dishonorable. I think it was flashing something that you knew your parents totally didn't like, that would be dishonorable, in my opinion.

Thomas [00:14:52] I see.

Jodi Willis [00:14:53] But I think, we were treated well. You know, if anything happened within the church, it had to do with just, adolescence. Kids are mean. I never had-- I can say that I can't think of anything in the church that had to do with the basis of the color of my skin. It doesn't matter what color you are, my biggest thing as an adult with children, teenage children and young adult children, is that just because we are in the house that serves the Lord, doesn't mean the children will. And I think so many times, I could write a soap opera regarding what happened in the lives, when I was a child. Not horrible, just the drama. But for us to condemn our children for not following what we perceive as God's word, or his will, or his way, doesn't mean your kid's a rotten kid. They just may not have a

relationship with Christ. They may not understand that relationship. And each of us will have to find that, our own salvation through Christ, in it. Just because you grew up in a Christian home does not make you Christian. Just because you grew up in a Catholic home, I don't think that makes you Catholic. Or any other, I think it's where you are. It's your relationship. But I think I feel like during the seventies, eighties and even the nineties as Christians, that was a hard thing to realize. And it wasn't until like, believe me, it wasn't until I was a mid-adult that I realized that my choice of having a relationship with Christ is my choice, not because my parents made me do it, or made me go.

Thomas [00:16:41] That's so powerful to come to it yourself, though. I mean, I do not envy the experience of pastors' children, because there's such an intrinsic expectation growing up that you have to be, you know. And the way you put it too, is a relationship with Christ. In what world does it make sense to say, You, Person A, must have a relationship with this person? Usually those manufactured scenarios are not very authentic, you know? So for you to be able to say, you know, I've come to it, and it's a relationship that's important to me? And what relationship other people have to their faith, or to their God, or to Christ, is going to be something that's with them. And there's also beauty in convening when, you know, it makes it more powerful when you are together congregating. Everyone really believes it.

Jodi Willis [00:17:37] Oh, yeah. Oh, my husband and I went through a really dry spell, because we met, actually at First Baptist Church in Eugene. On Wednesday night youth group. That's where we met. And, and after we got married and moving--

Thomas [00:17:51] So how old were you, like 16? 17? Youth group, sometimes that can be young.

Jodi Willis [00:17:55] Yes. So we met our senior year. So, I was 19 and he was still 18, when we got married.

Thomas [00:18:02] Wow. Yeah.

Jodi Willis [00:18:05] Yeah. So when he went into the military, it was really-- we tried to go to churches. But I have to say, back then? I mean, First Baptist has always had really great pastors. And so it was so hard to compare these pastors of these smaller churches in smaller communities to this wonderful pastor. And so we kind of stopped going. We never stopped having a relationship with Christ, we just stopped communing. Just because it was so hard. I mean, and I was young, we were both out of high school. And then even coming back, when we came back to Springfield after he got out of the military, we just went to the same church my parents did. In the Springfield Nazarene Church, and it was great. And then we started having kids, and then working full-time, and children. So you went through this dry spell of not attending, and it was about when our kids started going to an elementary school, and I was like, Oh God. So for me, youth group was very important as me as a teenager. My parents got divorced when I was in eighth grade. And it was devastating for all of us. Mike, my brother, would have been what, I think, fifth grade. My older sister would have been a freshman, and it was hard, because it had to do with betrayal.

Thomas [00:19:21] Brutal.

Jodi Willis [00:19:21] So not only your spouse is betrayed, but then your children are portrayed. And it was devastating, because I remember we though, Oh, don't you think

Mom and Dad are just like on House on the Prairie? They're just like Laura and Charles Ingalls and, you know, all this. And that's truly how, like, in my mind, how our family was. And then, my parents always been Christian, but does not make us perfect. And we make poor choices, and things happen. But my sophomore year of high school, my parents. My father repented and my mother took him back, and they got re-married, my sophomore year of high school. And now they've been married for 50 years? Something like that?

Thomas [00:20:06] Wow.

Jodi Willis [00:20:07] Little, like I said, like a little two year dry spot, but yeah. Yeah. So that taught me a lot about what marriage was, and forgiveness. And circumstances, and the whole story, kind of thing. I mean, because this April, I'll be married, 29 years?

Thomas [00:20:26] Wow.

Jodi Willis [00:20:28] Shoot.

Thomas [00:20:28] Good for you. That's incredible. That's amazing, though.

Jodi Willis [00:20:32] Sorry, I was like dang! I'm old. Old lady, old age.

Thomas [00:20:37] No, we're getting into these really exciting-- we're exploring family, you know? And commitment, and relationship. And I think that so much of a really strong-- I'm in a committed relationship, you know? You know, we're not engaged or anything, so much of it is sacrifice. And so much of it isn't thought of as sacrifice when you're going into it, I think. And sacrifice isn't all negative. You know, I think just by choosing to recognize another human being, look them in the eye and say, We're stronger together than we were as individuals, means that you value something there. Enough to, whether it be not committing infidelity, or make sure you're home at this hour, so that your commitment can actually center around that, and then it can grow from that stability of that strong partnership.

Jodi Willis [00:21:28] Mm hmm. Because some things, yeah, the idea of marriage? Yes, you forgo any other relationships. That one is, cut and dry.

Thomas [00:21:39] At least in your marriage.

Jodi Willis [00:21:41] Exactly.

Thomas [00:21:41] We're not speaking for everybody.

Jodi Willis [00:21:43] Not everybody. But at the same time, just because you want to have a career or a certain desire to do something in life, you might have to put it up. Postpone it. That postponing doesn't mean giving up.

Thomas [00:21:56] Right.

Jodi Willis [00:21:56] Yeah. I still remember when we were married and my husband, that's why he joined the military, because he wanted to be a doctor. So he was a corpsman for the Navy. And then he discovered he didn't like touching people.

Thomas [00:22:07] Oh.

Jodi Willis [00:22:10] Well, that one really eliminated the whole, like, well, that's out. But I remember we would have these-- and we were young. I mean, he was 18, 19. And I was like, I don't care what you want to do. If you had a desire, if you wanted to work as a city worker, or you know, I used the term gas attendant or garbage man, you know. I said, if that's what you want to do and you did it well, then so be it. But I will tell you, 50 years from now, I am not going to be your resentment. For you not pursuing your career because you thought it was going to inconvenience me. I said, I am not your scapegoat. I mean, I said that right away. And so it was just one of those things. No way, I'm not playing that game. And you know, it took us to where we are now. He got his degree, and a mortgage and two kids. And doing a full-time job, and going-- yeah, that was not ideal either. But we did it. And it was a huge sacrifice.

[00:23:11] So you're a mother of two.

[00:23:12] Yes. So, I mean, things don't happen exactly the way I thought they were going to happen. But for us, our relationship with Christ is the foundation. Because that never changes, no matter what circumstances happen. What you do yourself, what someone does to you, what a stranger does to you, that foundation with Christ never changes. And that his word and how he does have a purpose, and how he wants things to be, that never changes. He doesn't say, Well, I'll let that one slide because of that circumstance. It's still the same. But, beauty from ashes. He can make something beautiful, out of something so devastating. And I've seen that, especially becoming a mother, I mean, you hear it. It's always in whatever things you go to attend. But it's true. And so I was getting at was that the youth group was really part of why we started going back to church. It was because I wanted to make sure our children, if it hits the fan at home, that they have some somewhere to go, that I know that least the guidance they will get will be, what. Even though mom and dad didn't keep it together, at least that place might have kept together for them. And that was my balance, when my parents got divorced, was my youth group. I hung onto that. I was, you know, could go to people and know that they were going to counsel me, and support me, and push me in the path that would be what my parents would have wanted.

Thomas [00:24:50] Singing songs. Is that a part of your youth group experience?

Jodi Willis [00:24:53] Oh, yeah.

Thomas [00:24:54] I feel like the intersection of music and faith is really a powerful, important part of it for me.

Jodi Willis [00:25:00] Yeah, well, that's worship. I mean, that is the worship.

Thomas [00:25:02] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I wanted to ask you a few things about Springfield. Because I just think it's wonderful that you've been here for so long. And I think that when I conjure up the image in my head, and I think others probably have this feeling too, of what a Springfielder looks like? It doesn't immediately go to, to you. And so, I hope you're okay with that.

Jodi Willis [00:25:28] Nope.

Thomas [00:25:31] And so there might be misconceptions about this community, or perceptions of what this community is like. Do you have anything to say about that, as someone who's actually lived here?

Jodi Willis [00:25:44] Yeah. Have you heard the term, Springtucky? I mean that's definitely, Springfield is a little more country. A little more. Yeah, I mean, rednecky.

Thomas [00:26:00] Mm hmm. In a beautiful way.

Jodi Willis [00:26:01] Yeah. No, no, no, because I mean, my kids all go, they attend the local high school. And they go to the high school where I went to high school. So, that's kind of crazy, yeah, Because when my daughter was graduating,

Thomas [00:26:18] Was it the Millers? Springfield High School?

Jodi Willis [00:26:21] Thurston, we went to Thurston.

Thomas [00:26:21] Colts.

Jodi Willis [00:26:22] And when I went I was like, Oh my gosh. This is so weird, like, I haven't been here forever. And everything's like, some of it's the same, some of it's different. But I hadn't thought about high school. Like, I didn't like school. But it's just so weird to have them going to the same, my same high school.

Thomas [00:26:41] Yeah. As a mother, just putting your kids through school in general. I feel like when you first started doing that, was it hard? Or was it like, ahh, 8 hours a day I don't have to be parenting them? Or was it kind of like, These are my babies? Like, was it difficult to put your kids through public school? I mean, I love public school, I'm so glad I went through Eugene 4J, myself. But I imagine as a parent, there's just so much trust that you have to put in.

Jodi Willis [00:27:12] Yes, we were very blessed that my aunt at the time was the principal, at the elementary school were our kids went.

Thomas [00:27:17] So you had eyes in all places.

Jodi Willis [00:27:19] We were even out of district, but I was like, I don't care. We're out of district, but we're going to go to the school that Aunt Shari's at. So we were really lucky. And so I worked until my daughter was into her fourth grade year, and my son was in kindergarten. I stopped working, like full-time. So then I was able, I volunteered once a week at that school. I would usually do mornings, when both kids were at the same school, I would do mornings for one class, for his, and then in the afternoon for hers. And so I was able to do that for at least a year and a half, which was great. And then I did volunteer in the middle school for a while, but that one was cut short because middle school volunteering is not the same as elementary school.

Thomas [00:28:05] Oh, right.

Jodi Willis [00:28:07] Nope!

Thomas [00:28:07] More attitude?

Jodi Willis [00:28:07] Yeah.

Thomas [00:28:07] My partner is subbing. She's subbing, right this second, at a middle school. And it's hard because, you know, I love kids that age. I mean, there's so much about them that's precious and sweet. Maybe that lingering innocence, you know, that lingering childhood sweetness before they become-- I guess in some ways they're also quite bratty, at that age. And so I get texts saying, I'm never coming back, Thomas. I'm not going back to this school. You know, the kids won't stop throwing things, and they're especially rude to the subs.

Jodi Willis [00:28:40] Yes. I always joke about how when people envision getting married and having a family. They think about the baby, and they think about, like a toddler. And then somehow, somewhere down the line we jump to high school and them being this athlete, or whatever. And then them going to college and whatever. No one dreamt about the middle school years. Ever.

Thomas [00:29:04] Yes, that's so true. And then because you've been in Springfield for decades, you know. Do you feel-- I don't want to personally presume what your experience is, as an Asian-American. I would never want to do that, but I want to open up the possibility to talking about it, because we have more restaurants, more markets, more visibility over time, in this community. And again, we've touched on how it doesn't mean that you really think about the Asian-American community in Springfield immediately. I think that's why this project is neat, to be like, Oh yeah, remember this is a part of the community as well. No more important and no less important than anyone else. But has it changed over time, whether it's experiences with prejudice or anything like that?

Jodi Willis [00:29:55] Oh, for sure. Just having, like when I went to high school, it was my siblings. And my friend James Anderson, and his siblings. And maybe scattered here and there, maybe ten or 15. And you're talking about a place that has, like 400 kids. So that's not very many.

Thomas [00:30:16] Mm hmm.

Jodi Willis [00:30:20] So it was, I mean, never got treated. The worst a person ever treated me in school was a girl who was actually Puerto Rican. And I felt like back then, all I was was just trying to survive. But as an adult, I look back, and it's like, well, she couldn't hammer on the white girl, so she just took the next minority.

Thomas [00:30:40] Wow.

Jodi Willis [00:30:40] Made sense. Now, I think back, it makes sense. And that's just the way the pecking order was. But now it's so funny because my kids are half, they my dark hair and the dark eyes. My husband's Caucasian with the lighter. So Thurston, I love Thurston but Thurston is a little bit of a bubble. Protective bubble. There isn't a lot of minorities. Which I don't have a problem with that, I'm just stating a fact. So then we're actually, like I said, we're out of district. So when it came to middle school, my daughter, they had closed all the transfers, so she had to go to Agnes Middle. Agnes Stewart Middle School. In the long run, love Agnes. It was a great fit for her. But I remember my husband dropping us off for our open house, you know. Sixth grade middle, you know, meet your teacher, get your schedule. So he dropped us off, and we all go in and, you know, we're getting our food and she's getting her schedule. And he finally finds us, and he goes, It took me 15 minutes to find you. There's so many people here with dark hair. Because

Agnes Stewart has a heavier Hispanic population of the kids who attend. So it's the first time that he never-- Oh, he could spot the Asians anytime you go to Thurston, but you can't-- but the great thing now is now kids, most kids think that my daughter, when they first met her was Hispanic. Because, you know, when you're half you know the features.

Thomas [00:32:12] Yeah.

Jodi Willis [00:32:12] But just the diver-- there's so many more kids. It doesn't have to be Asian, just so much diversity, just different colors. And I love it, because that's the one thing that she doesn't have to feel self-conscious about. Because I remember, it was when my husband was in the navy and I worked at a retail store, and it was one of the managers. And I remember he said to me, Oh, I could never bring an Asian girl home. And at that moment, I was like, why no one ever asked me out on a date? Because I asked my husband on a date.

Thomas [00:32:48] Good for you.

Jodi Willis [00:32:48] I was like, Is that why? You know? And never even thought for a second that the reason why boys didn't, like, ask me out was maybe because it could have been the color of my skin. I was married by then, so it didn't matter, but it was like that dawning moment. And I have to say, it's one thing that I know that my daughter doesn't have to worry about. Like the chances of her not being asked on the date is because she's a different color, or mix. I mean, growing up here, my mom had said my grandparents were reluctant, when my parents started adopting different, you know, races. But I have to say, my grandparents loved us, treated us just the same. But when I got married, it was my husband's grandmother who did not like that I was, she was very cruel.

Thomas [00:33:40] Oh. Yeah.

Jodi Willis [00:33:41] So having to deal with her was somewhat difficult. But at the same time, she didn't know me. So how could I be-- I realized I couldn't be offended. Or really hurt by someone who doesn't actually know me. And in the long run, on my husband's side, my father in-law. He says, If she can't accept Jodi, then she's not my mother. So for ten years, we didn't do any holidays, or celebrate birthdays with her, because she wasn't going to be kind. But in the end, Grandma Grace, she came around. I think it was having kids that, having grandkids. Actually, because Halloween was yesterday. So there was a certain time, because she would say, I'm gonna say what she used to call me. She would call me a Jap, and a creepy crawly, and tell everybody that we were going to have ugly children.

Thomas [00:34:36] Oh, no.

Jodi Willis [00:34:38] And even Aunt Georgia, she would write her going, I cannot believe you say these things. And Aunt Georgia goes, You never raised us to be that way. Deep down, I think she was just a mean woman. I don't think she was racist. She just used the superficial language to be cruel, because she was a cruel woman.

Thomas [00:34:58] Grab whatever could. Use whatever weapon is sharp enough.

Jodi Willis [00:35:02] Oh, yeah. No, I have stories from the other sister. Our daughter in-laws, of what cruel things she said to them. You know, it pretty much was an equal as calling me names. So, she was not a nice person.

Thomas [00:35:12] Now you get to get back at her, and this is going to be recorded forever.

Jodi Willis [00:35:17] She's passed away. But I have to say. So when she started being kind to us enough, my biggest thing was as long as she didn't make my children feel any less, it was all that I cared about. And she did it, they did a good job. They were kind. And she came around. So every Halloween, I would come to the assisted living place. I only visited them once a year, and it was on Halloween. The kids would be dressed up. I'd be dressed up. We'd go to the assisted living house and they would get to see the kids in costume. We'd get to say hello, they'd get to get pictures, and we would leave. And that was once a year, and Halloween was it. And when she passed away, all of her kids, Grace's kids all thought that she and I were like best friends.

Thomas [00:36:10] Hmm.

Jodi Willis [00:36:11] And that's all I did. I promise you.

Thomas [00:36:16] Wow, yeah.

Jodi Willis [00:36:16] I promise you, that's all I did.

Thomas [00:36:20] What an interesting situation.

Jodi Willis [00:36:19] So I thought, well, my job was done. That's how I felt. Because like I said, if she was an older woman on the street and had a flat tire, I wouldn't drive by. Right? So I wasn't going to, she did not know me well enough for me to feel bitter or feel hurt. And it wasn't enough for me to treat her any worse.

Thomas [00:36:36] Hmm. Hmm. Jodi, it seems... let me phrase this the right way, because this could go on a poster. It seems that you have deep and enduring experiences with racism, but you're not focused on it day-to-day. Would you agree with that?

Jodi Willis [00:36:58] Yes.

Thomas [00:37:00] Talk about that.

Jodi Willis [00:37:02] I know it exists. But I also know, I think, it's not-- I mean, I know it exists stronger and I think each day it gets better. But I believe some of it is ignorance. And ignorance isn't bigotry, and ignorance isn't racist. Ignorance is ignorance. Not knowing?

Thomas [00:37:22] And we've all been ignorant of things.

Jodi Willis [00:37:24] Yeah,.

Thomas [00:37:24] By definition.

Jodi Willis [00:37:25] But at the same time, I also feel like so many things are said because it's, it's a self-esteem issue. It's about you as a human being, struggling to be liked, to be wanted, to be loved. To feel accepted, to feel like you have status. I mean, who doesn't want to have that? You know? And so in order to do that. We put other people

down. Not everyone, but the easy, humanistic way is to put someone down, to be cruel, or to exclude or not exclude. You know, the popular girl. The popular boy gets invited to the party, the non ones don't, right? Even though you don't know the popular boy, but if he shows up, it gives you status. I mean, that doesn't matter. I mean, in networking as an adult, that happens. Like who? Who? Who do you know? Who are your friends on Facebook? Who's following you? You know, who liked, guess who liked my-- you know, all. It's, its always. Always.

Thomas [00:38:25] Couple of weeks ago, I posted a picture and someone running for Congress liked it. And I'm like,.

Jodi Willis [00:38:30] Suh-weeet!

Thomas [00:38:30] Hey, she's going to be in Congress soon. Still sees my posts, hasn't muted me.

Jodi Willis [00:38:35] Yeah.

Thomas [00:38:35] But it's totally true.

Jodi Willis [00:38:36] But it's true. So what do we sacrifice, someone else's worth to get ourself up? And that's, it's weak. Very weak.

Thomas [00:38:48] Mmm, yeah. Because you're a strong person. I can tell that about you. I don't know if you would just take that as a compliment, but.

Jodi Willis [00:38:53] I am now, I wasn't. That's something I haven't-- . I wasn't made to be outspoken, or you know, even to do this. There's no way in heck. But it's confidence in the sense, I mean, being in a relationship for 29 years? I don't have to worry about finding somebody, impressing someone to find my desires, to seek me, to love me, to make me feel wanted. I already have that. So that's already off my plate. Right? And then society tells you, you had to be a mother. Well, I've got that one. So far, so good. My kids are good, you know? Well-behaved, you know? As I say, my job is to make sure that when you leave this house, that you are a positive contributor to the community that you are in. That is my goal. And that's why we do things the way we do, because some day I won't be here to be, and then that is your role.

Thomas [00:39:52] You can brag for a little bit. How are your kids affecting the community positively? Do you feel that they are?

Jodi Willis [00:39:57] Oh, yes..

Thomas [00:39:57] That'd be really sad if you were just like, mmhhh.

Jodi Willis [00:40:03] Well, yeah! My daughter, she graduated last year and she's attending LCC,.

Thomas [00:40:07] Great.

Jodi Willis [00:40:07] And she's honor in a choir, and then also she's going to be the Ghost of Christmas Past in a church event coming up for the Christmas Carol at East Side Baptist. And that's in both the choir, and this play that she's in is independent. She's doing

it on her own. She, you know. I think just being, not getting arrested, or being on Lane County Mugshots. I mean, gal.

Thomas [00:40:38] Forgive me for reading into it but Ghost of Christmas Past, she might be a very wise person.

Jodi Willis [00:40:42] Yeah.

Thomas [00:40:43] She might be somebody who people trust her word, you know?

Jodi Willis [00:40:47] She's a good, yeah. I didn't like my son in middle school, and I didn't like her in middle school. But as she has grown, she's becoming a very nice adult.

Thomas [00:40:57] Awesome.

Jodi Willis [00:40:58] And then as for my son, he's a very good young man. He's 15, he's a freshman. And I have to say, so he's been involved with Young Life. Springfield Young Life, Ron Sauer, he's just retiring as the director. Ron was my sixth grade teacher at Briggs Middle School, and then he decided to do Young Life full-time. But, so my son has been attending group with it and, what I love is this is open to any-- this is a freshman group. So it's open to any freshman, and it is boys because they have girls' ones. So this is boys. And what I love is, umm, he had a couple of friends who I said, Hey, so-and-so is going to come to Young Life with you because his parents need a ride. And, you know, I was wondering, you should invite him. That way we can pick him up after. Because my son would walk after football practice to Ron's house, and then we'd pick him up after, and they'd feed them and whatnot. And so he goes, Oh yeah. And so-and-so won too, he goes. And what he said was, 'Yeah, I see how you guys--the group of boys who play football who also attend Young Life--you guys have a connection. And you just, you're like always there for each other. And they're cheerleaders, like they're always supporting each other. And I want to see that. I want to see what's going on.' So the fact that he's just being himself? But yet these boys who've maybe never heard about Christ, but they see that there's something different in these young men? That's-- I think he's contributing.

Thomas [00:42:34] Wow, yeah.

Jodi Willis [00:42:34] Yup.

Thomas [00:42:35] Positivity spreads well.

Jodi Willis [00:42:37] It does.

Thomas [00:42:37] If you're willing to be brave and reach out to people, and all of that.

Jodi Willis [00:42:44] Mm hmm.

Thomas [00:42:44] I also have to think that as a parent of two young adults now, there's a certain trust that you put in the future. Or I would be worrying about the future, if I brought a kid into the world. You know, there's so much that feels less-than-stable right now. Hopefully the people watching this, and I mean this really, people watching this in the 2040s, 2050s, 2060s. If you're listening, thank you. Umm, they have to understand that we're in a time right now that feels chaotic, and feels destabilized. And without being any focused on any particular issue or anything, you know, I think you probably derive your

faith in the future from your faith in God. But, you know, where does that come from? Your willingness to trust in the future.

Jodi Willis [00:43:31] Well, I have a lot of nieces and nephews here at the age of 18 to, oh golly, those boys, 25. And I know a lot of, for them? For some of them, 'No, I don't want to have kids. Why would I want to bring a kid into this world?' And then I even have friends, coworkers, who have kids who are in their thirties. And they were like, 'I was hoping I was going to be a grandma, but nope, my, my, they don't want to have kids.' And it breaks my heart because, like, there's never been a great time to have a child. Sorry. I mean, if you-- we're not talking financially, like we're not individually. We're talking about a time period, you know? And here we're talking, it's like, and that that's total faith. Because you can't have-- it's knowing that-- So, when I was in high school. With a librarian, Mr. Essig, overheard me and my friends talking because it was, I don't know, I had to say, I was like, I'm never having kids. Because kids are poops, you know? I'm sorry. But, you know? And he turned around and looked at me and he said, you are the exact kind of people that need to have kids. And I was like, Whoa.

Thomas [00:44:44] Hmm.

Jodi Willis [00:44:44] And look, the fact that I can still remember that after 30 years. And then as an adult and I'm thinking, he's right. It's the ones who are aware of, that life isn't going to be perfect, and there are going to be ups and downs. They still knowing that new life? It's so much better than nothing. I mean, yeah. I love my, I can't even imagine. Like, I can't imagine. I mean, I love my I-- I love my children.

Thomas [00:45:16] Yeah.

Jodi Willis [00:45:16] And I never thought I would. I mean, we waited ten years to have kids. When I didn't want to be 19 and have a child. But that was like, but I actually went through a period that I thought we wouldn't. I mean, ten years not having children, that's not normal. But we, we just kind of like got a house it's like, I guess it's time to have kids. I mean, that's what happens, right? Yeah. And so I don't know, I never, like some people-- like I never worshiped them or what. But I knew that they were special, you know? I don't know, I didn't dote over them. Which is fine if people do. But I, I don't know. Because I think I felt like I know that I'm creating a human being for something. For not, me.

Thomas [00:46:02] Mmm.

Jodi Willis [00:46:02] Is that--?

Thomas [00:46:04] Yeah. Some greater purpose, or the plan isn't your plan.

Jodi Willis [00:46:10] Or the total fear that something bad would happen. This is another thing because I'm very, actually pessimistic. Like if I invest too much into them, like, I just feel like I'm being-- Like I said, dreaming about, You're going to be the quarterback, and you're going to be the President of the United States. I never, ever think about what they're going to be, because it's not, that's not their dream. That's my dream. And if I start thinking of the things I want them to be? And then they don't? All I'm doing is cutting myself short. But on something that's not even real.

Thomas [00:46:43] Wow.

Jodi Willis [00:46:44] And I think so many parents do that. You know what I mean? Like, oh, if I wish, and going. And that's the whole thing about the faith. Like, they might, you know. I love my family. And yes, we were raised in a Christian family and we had our ups and downs. But I see how my siblings, we don't all have relationship with Christ. And it saddens me. But at the same time, that was my realization that it doesn't always happen that way. That we each were under the same house, and we were under the same circumstances. We had the same traumatic -- like, divorce is traumatic -- situation. And we all totally dealt with that differently.

Thomas [00:47:24] Mmm.

Jodi Willis [00:47:25] And, yeah. Sorry. Parents can really eff up your kids. But at the same time, it was where we, yeah. It's just each of us finding, overcoming it. And we all have, we all did it different. Differently.

Thomas [00:47:41] This has been a really lovely and rich interview. I've really enjoyed, just your willingness to get deep and go into these different topics. And this might be one of the deepest of them all, I think, because so much of what I've asked you has come back to faith. And one of the things with me, you know, I'm not currently involved in a church. I've seen the value of having that at various points. I have friendships and relationships, I especially value my friendships across the political spectrum. Because nowadays we're very-- because I have a very strong political identity and belief.

Jodi Willis [00:48:12] Mm hmm.

Thomas [00:48:12] And now I feel social pressure to reject friends who don't. And I don't like that. I would like to be connected with people, and know really what they're hearing and seeing, and what leads them to believe things that might be very different than what I believe. So I've seen the value of church and faith and community. But also, one of the things is, I don't think that it's easy to observe the way that this microphone stand, or this phone is. There's a leap of faith, right? So much of it is based on things that are not as easy to observe. I don't want to say, you know, God has never spoken to me or something. Because maybe, maybe God has. But what about those times when you doubt, and you're like, what if you have based so much of your life on something that isn't true? I mean, you know?

Jodi Willis [00:49:02] Oh yeah, no, no. Because like I said, family members who don't have relationship with Christ.

Thomas [00:49:07] Maybe isn't true is a weird way to put it, but that's just what I'm trying to get at.

Jodi Willis [00:49:10] Well, so the purpose of Christ is the fact that you find your salvation. And salvation is only through him. That you will then, because I believe we have a soul. I know there are people who do not believe that we have souls. That when we die, there is nothing.

Thomas [00:49:28] Mm hmm.

Jodi Willis [00:49:29] So, that's a hard one. When I believe that we have a soul, that we will be those who-- and a prayer that I say a lot, and as I gotten older and learned more about what it is to have a relationship with Christ and what his purpose is. It's like, it's not

the fact that I knew him. It was that he knew me. Because a lot of people know that Jesus exists, know his name, read the Bible up and down, whatever. They know, they can recite Bible verses, they can know Jesus. But do they know him? Do they have a personal relationship to the point that you know that he accepts me exactly the way I am. And a past that may not have been clean, or are still living in, presently living in a situation that we know may not be God's liking. But if I come to him, he accepts me exact. He's not saying, Okay, because you now have a relationship with me, you have to stop all this. And he's not demanding, he never makes demand on that. But what it is, is that you realize that you don't want to live that life anymore. Because all it has is brought disappointment, ridicule, shame. I mean, if shame is because you know you should have done something different, right?

Thomas [00:51:01] Mm hmm.

Jodi Willis [00:51:02] What is it I heard today? It's like, God always gives us the right way out. It's whether or not we choose to take that route. And in life, everything has sacrifice. Everything could be financial, and it could be spiritual in the sense of, I am going to be humiliated-- like my jobs in my life? The last jobs I've had, I've been fired. And I laugh.

Thomas [00:51:30] I feel like it's, we haven't gotten to your professional life at all. I had another interview in this room where the gentleman was only talking about his professional life. So it's kind of interesting to think about, you know, whether you wanted to get into any of that.

Jodi Willis [00:51:43] Oh, yeah. I work as a barista at the coffee shop, Like, a coffee gift shop. But I actually own my own business, too, I make earrings.

Thomas [00:51:48] Phenomenal. Oh, yes. You make earrings, and you sell them.

Jodi Willis [00:51:52] Yes. So we used to joke--.

Thomas [00:51:54] You made those?

Jodi Willis [00:51:55] We used to joke that this is my side hustle. Now, I think that the barista job is my side hustle, which is kind of good.

Thomas [00:52:01] Right. Good.

Jodi Willis [00:52:01] Yeah, so it gave me a chance to stay home. But, which has led like I had said, humiliation. I'm always like, Yeah, I got fired from my last two jobs. And it really wasn't, I mean, like I know I could have done better, but it wasn't like I went out and punched somebody, kind of like, blatantly. And one day, my girlfriend said, she goes, Jodi, it's not humiliation. It's humbling. And I thought, oh my gosh, you're right. I shouldn't be humiliated. I mean, yeah, sure, it's not proud about it. But at the same time, it humbled me to realize where I needed to be.

Thomas [00:52:35] Yes.

Jodi Willis [00:52:36] And it was at home. For me, it was home. And that's where I find--

Thomas [00:52:42] Sometimes people will be in a job. They're just comfortable enough to not quit. But then, it's not the right fit for them. So sometimes just to have that ending? Start the new chapter, figure out what you really need to be doing with your time.

Jodi Willis [00:52:55] Yes. So, I mean, in my situation, I got fired for being bullied.

Thomas [00:53:00] Oh, goodness. I'm sorry to hear that.

Jodi Willis [00:53:02] But somehow, because I kind of participated, which I shouldn't have reciprocated, caused some issues. And I admit that, like I said, I wasn't perfect. But the funny part was, my husband had just gotten a raise. And when we did the finances after I got fired, that his raise was exactly the amount of money that I made part-time. We wouldn't have done the calculation if I hadn't gotten fired, and we would have just spent that money on stuff that we didn't need. So that was my first, like, you were talking about God moment. Of like, God does take care of you, and sometimes it isn't pretty. God has a sense of humor that no one knows. Sense of humor. And then from that, I raised, helped raise a friend of the family's daughters. Like she, the daughter was one when I started watching her. And now she has daughters, nine, and she has a six year-old. But they were old friends of the family. Their parents actually, the mom's parents were actually at the airport with my parents, when they adopted. So long, long-- So I got to raise her kids, two days a week, for seven years. And then now, and the only reason I'm at the coffee shop is because they were going to school full-time and I wasn't I didn't want to work this little teeny hours. I just wanted a solid, all I said was, All I need is \$78 a week. That's all. Just to get that income. So in between then, I start, I'm very crafty. So then I, actually it was a Wednesday night youth group. Middle school. My daughter invited, mother and daughter, we got invited for Mother's Day. And Organ Leather donated some leather to the girls, and we made jewelry. And I was like, Oh, this is kind of fun. I can do this. So I started, you know, figuring things out. And then I created my line, and I was trying to think of a name, to do it. And I was like, I'm not going to use my name. But then I was like, I know I'm Asian. Shelly's like, nah. Because, yes, I know I'm Asian, but that's not... who I am. I mean, I'm not saying it's bad, it's not bad or good.

Thomas [00:55:09] I don't always want to be defined by it. You know?

Jodi Willis [00:55:12] Well yeah, and you know, well, in here. Being like, Well, maybe if I said it's Asian, it might be more, like people might be more interested. And I thought that, nah. That's, to me, is superficial, and that's not what I wanted to, in the long run, be my basis of what I named my business, or promoted it as. And then in the Bible, a Bible verse, there's the Psalms. Oh I gotta look it up.

Thomas [00:55:37] Sure.

Jodi Willis [00:55:38] Yes, sorry. Thank you.

Thomas [00:55:39] No, no problem.

Jodi Willis [00:55:41] Psalms 91:4. So my business is Feathers & Arrows.

[00:55:45] Psalms goes up to like 150-something, that's a lot in there.

[00:55:47] Yeah. It's a lot of songs. But, I was gonna say, it's Feathers & Arrows is the name of my business. It's feathers, because I make leather feather earrings. But feathers

in the sense, because there's a verse that's Psalms 91:4, that says, 'He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.' And the reason why I started the business is because I wanted to stay home. So what more? To have faith, knowing that I'm in the wings, of my family. The other one verse where the food arrows comes from is, it's Psalms 127:3-5, and it says, Children are a heritage from God. And his goal is for us to have a quiver full of arrows, become warriors of Christ. So my children. So when I do things, I always say, raising arrows. Hashtag, because I am #raisingarrows. I'm home, to be with them. So that I can raise these arrows to go out and be warriors of God. And so that's why I have, people think I'm Native American. Because it's the vibe. It's a boho-ey vibe, and in the name, Feathers & Arrows. But it has nothing, it has to do with being a parent, and raising my children. That's why I named it Feathers & Arrows. Because, and I like that way better than trying to sell myself because it was owned by an immigrant woman. That, to me, is superficial.

Thomas [00:57:25] Mmm.

Jodi Willis [00:57:25] That is only skin deep. But the name, with the verses, has such, to me an actual meaning.

Thomas [00:57:32] Wow. Is there anything else that you feel like you wish that we had gotten to? This is about you, and I feel like people have gotten a lot from getting to hear from you. And I really appreciate it.

Jodi Willis [00:57:43] Oh. Umm no, I mean, I love it here. I mean, other than the weather. I would like to live in California just for the sunny.

Thomas [00:57:53] It's creeping up, though.

Jodi Willis [00:57:55] Yeah, but no. I mean, we have good friends here. We love the church in our community. And there's ups and downs, are we're all human. But my kids love it here. And, you know, we have a home for them. And, you know, I don't know. That's one thing, when you don't move away. It's amazing how many people you end up knowing.

Thomas [00:58:20] Right, right.

Jodi Willis [00:58:22] Or seeing, like some people I've never seen since high school. And then all of a sudden, because we start having kids at the same age, it's like, oh my gosh, I haven't seen you in-- you know, and it's crazy. And then sometimes you run away from them, because they treated you bad.

Thomas [00:58:35] You do that thing where you don't remember their name, too, and you're like, Oh yeah, you.

Jodi Willis [00:58:39] But then you are forced to be in a room with them for some odd reason, then you realize, you know what? Don't judge me, by how I treated you in high school, either. Or middle school, because I probably was, I was surviving. We all were surviving. And I am not the same person I was, you know, 35 years ago. And so, it's so funny because I would hide from one gal, and then we ended up and I'm going, Okay, she's not as bad as I thought. Because, you know, that scar, that little bit of, little somethin'. And that stuff takes time and maturity.

Thomas [00:59:14] Yeah, absolutely. Interpersonal dynamics can just, like, have a person and a person. They just don't have connection, or they just have a first reaction to one another that just isn't symbiotic or something. And it's like, it's just fascinating. Sometimes I have a friend, it's like, Oh, you would love Brandon. It's like, Okay, Brandon, you would love Nathan. And then it just isn't, the chemistry isn't there. But sometimes, you know, maybe that would be forces beyond our control. They put people in your life, or they show you that this person that you had written off, maybe had this other, this whole other self to them.

Jodi Willis [00:59:53] Oh, yeah. Or for me. I had a friend who I've known since sixth grade, and then rekindled as an adult. And I was helping her out with her business. And then she literally stole from me, and made me walk away. And I was like, and that was supposed to be a good relationship. Like I had good memories with her, you know? But in the situation I walked away, and my business scored. Like the fact that I'm in more than three locations, that I get regular wholesale orders. If I hadn't left her. And I left because I was not being treated well, you know, and it's kind of funny. It's like, I almost want to say thanks for treating me like crap because I would have never left. I would have been faithful to you. But sometimes people don't earn that faithful, but sometimes we do because we're a loyal and honorable person. But so, like I said, sometimes you gotta kick yourself in the butt, to move on.

Thomas [01:00:55] Nice thing about Springfield, too. Yes, it's considered a small town, but there's enough people. You don't see the same person everywhere all the time, necessarily.

Jodi Willis [01:01:03] Oh, yeah. For sure.

Thomas [01:01:03] You can find your pockets of space.

Jodi Willis [01:01:05] For sure, yeah. No, Springfield is, it is a very nice place to raise your kids. I mean, there's gonna never be that perfect place you're going to, you know, just. Like we're just learning now, the politics among just, like, getting your kids to play certain sports and being able to qualify and whatnot. Because it's not Kidsports anymore, people. We want to win.

Thomas [01:01:34] Yeah. Yeah.

Jodi Willis [01:01:36] That's the truth. Because we always wanted to win. Nobody wants to be in last place. Everybody wants to be in first. And so there's these new things of like-- and I'm so not knowledgeable about the sports thingies. Like, I stopped a long time ago, yelling. Like, I'll say something. And my husband's like, No no no, that was a bad thing. Oh. So I don't even say anything I like. I don't say, because I have no idea if it's good or bad and I don't want to make, but I make a fool of myself.

Thomas [01:02:05] Some of the politics around getting a kid in the sports teams, too sometimes, the gear is expensive, you know? And there's new gear that comes out every year, and you keep up with the Joneses because they've-- For me in baseball, you had a new bat, a new helmet, batting gloves, cleats.

Jodi Willis [01:02:19] That is one of the most expensive sports.

Thomas [01:02:21] Incredibly expensive gloves, you know?

Jodi Willis [01:02:22] Yeah. But the funny thing is, people don't know it but there's so many scholarships. Just even going to the coach because, the coach isn't the one who's running it. He's under organization. But it's being humble enough to say, You know what, my kid really loves this sport, but I can't afford that fee. What could we do? And you, yeah. It's admitting that you may not have the income, but it's going and saying it. And I will tell you that the people that I know who are in that situation have said it, and there are some parents in the past who have given. Like, will this pay for his? They pay for it.

Thomas [01:03:01] Amazing.

Jodi Willis [01:03:01] And they don't ever know. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. But it's like, it's just being, just be upfront. Take honesty over, Oh, they're not participating. And they always, they do really say that if your kid can't afford this or you can't afford the fee, come to me. And really, they make it happen.

Thomas [01:03:23] Amazing.

Jodi Willis [01:03:24] But it is, it takes a little, it's not humility. It's humbling yourself to say, I need help.

Thomas [01:03:30] Right. Well, this is awesome. I think that we've hit on so many wonderful things. And hopefully we'll get a chance to talk more, some time in the future. But Jodi Willis, I really want to thank you for being part of the ILLUMINATION Project this year of 2022-23. I'm Thomas Hiura. Mimi Nolloedo and Aimee Yogi are here, and we're so glad to have had you. Thank you very much.

Jodi Willis [01:03:54] Thank you.

Thomas [01:03:54] And thank you for the people watching at home. We appreciate you, and everybody take care. Bye-bye.