

Brady music: [00:08](#) ***music plays***

Liz: [00:08](#) Hey everybody! This is the legal disclaimer where we tell you the views, thoughts, and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to us, the people talking on the podcast, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay. We find it disturbing too.

Brady music: [00:45](#) ***music plays***

JJ: [00:45](#) Welcome back to the "Red, Blue and Brady" podcast that is all about gun violence and more importantly, gun violence prevention. Now, as you may have guessed from the intro, no, that was not my voice. So today we have a special guest. I mean actually we have two special guests. We're joined by Christian Heyne, the VP of Policy at Brady, and Liz Dunning, the Director of Institutional Giving at Brady. Now, both Christian and Liz work at Brady and both lost their moms to gun violence. In this episode, we're going to talk about how they deal with that loss and how they balance working in gun violence prevention with their personal lives. And, you know, what brought them to Brady. Then, in our "Unbelievable, But" segment, we're breaking down why you shouldn't shoot guns into the air. Yes, that is a legitimate PSA that I am forced to give. Then, finally, I'm wrapping up with a gun violence prevention hero and a very special holiday ask. This is a really important podcast for me, you guys, I...I've really wanted to have Christian and Liz on for a while so let's just get straight into it.

Brady music: [01:52](#) ***music plays***

JJ: [01:53](#) Hey! I am here today with two fantastic people. We are having sort of a relaxed or weird episode where I'll, there'll be a picture of what our setup looks like right now that I will tweet out where we're going through it at the moment, but I'm really happy that we were able to make this happen. I am here with Christian--Christian, would you introduce yourself?

Christian: [02:13](#) Christian Heyne, Vice President of Policy here at Brady.

JJ: [02:15](#) Who, as long time listeners will know, is frequently trying to steal JP's guest spot job. I'll note you've been here an awful lot.

Christian: [02:24](#) Let's see, see the tracker.

JJ: [02:25](#) He's been traveling quite a bit! So and of course Liz! Would you introduce yourself?

Liz: [02:29](#) Sure. Liz Dunning, Director of Institutional Giving and nearly six months at Brady.

Christian: [02:35](#) Oh, welcome.

Liz: [02:36](#) Yeah.

Liz: [02:37](#) Coming up on the anniversary!

JJ: [02:38](#) As someone else who's like brand-newish to Brady, I'm really happy, and we're having a delicious IPA, and hanging out, sitting on the floor of the studio. That's accurate because our table broke.

Liz: [02:48](#) That's true.

Christian: [02:49](#) Great studio. You got makeshift table right here.

JJ: [02:51](#) It's my Harry Potter space, I call it.

Liz: [02:53](#) It's an authentic experience.

JJ: [02:56](#) Authentic is a good, nice Instagram way of phrasing it.

Liz: [02:59](#) Listen, I'm all for the authentic experience guys. That's like my whole thing.

Christian: [03:04](#) Email out to our supporters. This is how far we stretch your money. Very, very thrifty and focused. We make it work well.

All: [03:13](#) ***laughing, talking over one another***

JJ: [03:13](#) So can you go ahead and maybe then introduce yourselves beyond, you know, what your positions are here at Brady?

Christian: [03:20](#) Yeah, absolutely. Um, I think, I don't, I can't even remember if I've talked about this on the podcast yet.

JJ: [03:26](#) You haven't, no. You've made reference to it because I've had you in when we've talked to other survivors and you've been like, "in my experience," but we've never talked about what makes you in that awful club.

Christian: [03:38](#) Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, I came to this movement to the gun violence prevention movement in much in the same way that, uh, so many people do. For us, it was Memorial day weekend and in 2005 and my parents, uh, had decided to take a trip. We have a cabin in Big Bear, California. Uh, it's right near, uh, the Lake. Uh, actually our entry points is...Boulder Bay is really beautiful, and the family was going to go, but all the kids had something, right? Like I was, uh, wakeboarding with friends and another place. And, uh, my brother had a trip and my sister had, uh, had a church trip herself. And so my parents ended up making a holiday, a couples vacation. That was really one for the record books, right? They borrowed a boat from my dad's best friend. Um, my dad's best friend's name is Steve. And, uh, they use that boat for the weekend, getting sunburn and eating barbecue.

Christian: [04:38](#) And when they came back from that vacation, they came to return the boat to my dad's best friend. And Steve had a restraining order against an individual as a credible threat of violence. And my parents happened to be at his house returning the boat as that man lay in wait. Um, they, they got there before Steve did. And when Steve arrived, the gunman decided to go through with his plan. He had a backpack with three handguns in it and my mom was over in the corner. My dad was strapping up the boat. Um, my mom's in the corner talking to Steve, Steve's talking about some stuff he wants to do with his property, and this guy was somebody that we had known in our lives. My dad didn't quite understand what was going on, thought he was coming up to give him a big bear hug. He walked up the driveway and he pulled the gun out.

Christian: [05:28](#) And when Steve turned around, he shot Steve, uh, in the chest. That's when he turned the gun on my dad. And, and right then is about when my dad realized it and he got, he got shot in the abdomen himself and uh, you know, no sensation. Couldn't feel any of it, wasn't sure exactly what was happening, but he knew, Oh, I just got shot and he ran around the garage and I don't know if he did this to lead the gum and away from my mom. Frankly, he was probably just running for his life and the gunman shot two more times at one that shattered his forearm and another one then entered through his, uh, his side. And almost certainly the gunman thought he was going to leave my dad for dead. And when he turned back around, neighbors told us that she hadn't run away.

Christian: [06:11](#) My mom had stayed to put pressure on Steve's wound, try to keep him alive and the gunman came back, let her beg for her life. She ran about 10 steps and she was shot and killed with a

single bullet. This government went on to terrorize our entire community. I come from an area now that's infamous as another location of a mass shooting in thousand Oaks, California consistently rated one of the safest cities in America. This man went on to go the next morning, break into a home, bludgeoned a mother to death in front of her. Two kids, put both of those kids in ICU by pistol whipping them. He shot and wounded a police officer. He shot at the husband from that home as well. He got in the car, went down to a Walmart, where he eventually took his own life and months later my dad did survive all of his wounds.

- Christian: [07:01](#) Uh, we're very, very fortunate for a long recovery and, and a wonderful medical staff at Los Robles hospital in thousand Oaks, California. One thing I took away after months of that emotional and physical recovery was really realizing that there is no community in America that should feel safe or like it can possibly be free of gun violence when our laws are so broken. And so that is when me and my father got involved and frankly why I'm really excited to be at Brady today, because the first organization that we turned to was Brady. Brady is the place where, um, we started a chapter in mentor County. I started one on my college campus and it's the organization where I found my voice as an advocate, because of so many wonderful other survivors doing this work in California, who showed me both that my story is really important, but it's also not the only thing. And that we can also be subject matter experts and we can have an impact as long as we're ready for a really long haul and all these years later, I'm very excited to be back here at Brady, but that's how I got into the movement.
- JJ: [08:06](#) And I've, I've heard you tell that story a few times now and I feel like every time I learn something else with it, I didn't, how old were you?
- Christian: [08:15](#) I was 18 years old at the time. And frankly like without any idea of what I wanted to do with my life, I was going to community college. The last conversation I ever had with my mom, uh, we were talking about it and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I was running a plumbing company at the time with a friend of mine. You know, this event really catalyzed something in me. And beyond that, I had a really wonderful at Moorpark Community college. I had a really wonderful political science teacher that showed me that high school isn't college, college isn't high school. Right. Right. So, um, so, and then, and then the staff at, uh, my college campus and Chico were absolutely too, but yeah, pretty a pretty formative moment in my life for a lot of reasons.

Liz: [08:59](#) So, I'm also a gun violence survivor. My story is different than Christian's in some ways and similar in others. My mom was also shot and killed answering the front door of my parents' home on Friday, December 5th, 2003. She, um, was killed by someone honestly, that we didn't, we didn't know who it was for almost 11 years. Um, it went unsolved for a long time. And in the interim period, um, he killed two other people and it was actually their murders and the similarities in the ballistics that allowed my mom's murder to be solved. But my, my younger brother and my dad discovered her, that, she was supposed to meet them for lunch and she didn't show up and they came back to the house and found her in the front hall. She was killed, um, with a tiny little gun.

Liz: [09:51](#) It was a, um, North American Arms, five shot mini revolver. That's another thing I didn't learn until just a few years ago. But the killer, he liked that gun and he used it for all three murders, um, because he could fit it inside his sleeve so he could knock on the door or ring the bell and have somebody answer the door and not see it coming. He shot her three times. She didn't die instantly. She probably suffered, um, fairly considerably. And for a long, long time it was unsolved. My, my dad was at the time the elected sheriff of Alexandria, Virginia. And so there was a lot of attention. I mean, I left the funeral six days later, um, to a wall of cameras, camera men jumped out of the bushes, uh, out front of my parents' home when I went back to get the clothes that we were going to bury my mom in.

Liz: [10:43](#) I mean, so there was an amount of glare and it was salacious and it was unsolved. And my dad was the sheriff and there was all of this...and it was a very safe neighborhood and it was, uh, you know, white, middle class neighborhood in the suburbs where, you know, these things don't happen. And that actually meant that for a long time. I, I didn't do this work. It was too hard and too weird. And the questions around my mom's murder were unpredictable and often really personal in ways that didn't feel safe. And so it was after, after my mom's killer was convicted on November 2nd, 2015 and that was another weird one. I mean, if there's a moment, if there's a moment that I'm probably scared or that I've ever been scared in my life, it's sitting in that courtroom with my brother.

Liz: [11:37](#) My dad passed away. Um, unfortunately before, um, my mom's killer was identified, indicted and convicted, but we'd been told all along that, you know, it might not come, it might be a split verdict. It might be...the timeline might seem insurmountable to the, you know, if there's anybody left out of the cold, it's going to be you guys. And we're sitting in a courtroom holding hands

and we're count seven. So we're not going to know whether we're going to have this incredibly vulnerable moment in a room filled, filled to the brim with press and all the rest of it, and, and not get the relief that we're seeking or whether we were. And luckily for us, we, um, we did, I've never been more grateful to 12 people in my entire life. Um, if I, and it's one of the weird things, and I don't know if you feel this way, but you know, I don't know who they are.

- Liz: [12:28](#) I don't know their names. I can't, I mean, I'm a persistent sender of thank you notes, right? And, and they've given me this incredible gift. Probably one of the most important I've ever received except for, you know, my husband and two kids and I, I can't ever really thank them properly. Yeah, it's a funny, it's a funny thing. But after that happened, I started thinking and it took me some time, it took me time just to adjust to a different reality where my lived experience could, my whole lived experience could come into my daily life in a way that it just wasn't practical for it to before where I started thinking about, well, okay, is there something I can, is something I can do here? I'm a person who does things, right? I know stuff. Um, and so gosh, about three years ago, um, around this time of year, actually I went out for a long run and I thought, well, heck, what if I ran a marathon? I was 26 when my mom was killed--
- Christian: [13:29](#) Were you already a runner?
- Liz: [13:30](#) Yeah, but not like, not like this. Like I've gotten super weird about running in a way. I was not before, but, um, what if I ran a marathon for my mom? And if I went home and looked on the internet and it turned out that they were the DC rock and roll marathon was on my mom's 70th birthday, I was turning 40 about six weeks later. And I thought, well, this is a sign, like I should do this. And so, so I decided to do that and I thought, well, that doesn't feel, that's great. That doesn't feel like enough. What can I do with that? Um, and my parents were, they were, I've checked the records. They were Brady donors. Um, they were supporters. Um, and it's, I mean, I know I can take a look.
- Christian: [14:11](#) You have the receipts.
- Liz: [14:12](#) Um, but it seemed like an opportunity to do some good and also to share my voice in my own way. Did some blogging, uh, in the ramp up to raise money for Brady for that marathon. And I raised about 30,000 bucks. That was not quite three years ago, which was amazing. It was great. It was, and it was, is wonderful.

JJ: [14:33](#) Yeah. It's really for anybody listening in really, really well, we'll link to it.

Liz: [14:39](#) But it was this really interesting gift of just having a different relationship to the story. Being able to tell my own story to talk about what, how the loss fit in my life more largely what I've learned from it, what I just, how I carry it, how it, what shape it takes, how that changes and and to have that be supported and really validated by so many people. People I knew, people that just heard about it from somebody else or on the TV or the newspaper or whatever, which is really gratifying and it was a different kind of attention it was and that felt really good. Then it just sort of kind of naturally took its course. I did a little bit of stuff around the edges with Brady and then I know how to do this work I'm doing now, which is fundraising guys, um, and, and nonprofit management stuff. Um, probably more generally, but it just happened that there was a role here that made sense for who I am as a professional.

Christian: [15:38](#) Well, you and you have control over it for the first time.

Liz: [15:42](#) Right. Cause that's, uh, you know, for, because our stories are obviously we come to this with the same kind of pole. Um, but our stories are very different.

Christian: [15:52](#) Right. And I, my...our killer killed himself, so we didn't have to suffer through the court or not knowing or I, you know, I have a host of other things, including the fact that when I was a younger person, I used to work with this guy. And so like, he was like known to us and there's like layers and his connections to people. And then just the sheer fact of, uh, living in the reality where that's our story now. You know, it's a part of us and it was big in our community because it was a, an outlier, but it wasn't national news, you know, and, and, and so anyways, so, you know, so for right away, you know, for us it was almost the opposite where I had to work really hard to get people to care about our story or, you know, and, and not enough people died for it to be that national news.

Christian: [16:48](#) And, and, and, you know, it's an awful thing cause I feel like there's so much pain in, in both. Like I have so many friends from Virginia tech or Sandy hook or all these other horrific stories where you have to learn how to mourn in the public.

Liz: [17:02](#) Well, and what do you keep for yourself and what do you give? I mean, as you talk about your story publicly, I would guess, and you don't have to answer this, but for me, um, it's tricky because there are people that know my mom in a way that is

genuine and authentic. And they're people that know my mom because of her murder and her outside community impact that kind of are all mixed up in something that becomes lore.

JJ: [17:27](#)

Well there's a, there's a true crime book about--

Liz: [17:29](#)

There is a, there is a story about what happened to my mom. Um, yeah, the prosecutor wrote a book that came out in August. I actually haven't read it yet, but he is a good human and so I hope it is a good book--but it's just sort of that sort of thing though, is that this person who's, it's your mom.

JJ: [17:45](#)

Yeah. And suddenly they belong in a way to other people.

Christian: [17:50](#)

Same deal, right? People have come to the, over a thousand people showed up at her funeral. People even recently, I still get emails. I got an email six months ago from somebody who had just found out who went to high school with her and talked about how important she was in his life to be able to become the person that he is. And it was really heartfelt and wonderful. And then there's also the other side, you know, to your point where it's like, you know, my mom wasn't perfect. She was a human and like, you know, she like, she definitely had her flaws and, and even for us, you know, for my siblings and I, my sister has become a psychologist so she's done a lot of thinking about a lot of things and there is a lot of, I mean she was 13, I was 18 and so there was a lot of, even in our own world of creating a persona that isn't necessarily, yeah, yeah.

Liz: [18:41](#)

Accurate. Well, and that's just what do you keep for yourself versus what do you share? Acknowledging that like whatever, um, Thanksgiving, Christmas time, she's not going to be the absent chair at anybody else's table. Right. You know, I have two kids and on December 5th, what we'll do is we'll, we'll light luminarias my mom used to do it in our neighborhood as part of a community thing, community development thing, but we'll do one for every year she's been gone. My kids now are old enough that they'll draw pictures on them and they'll draw letters to her and they'll, you know, and that's our thing. It's, you know, it's not about sharing it, um, or, or being part of something larger. It's about giving them space to, you know, talk about my grandma and we were playing dominoes as we do these days. I'll plug for dominoes, it's better than you remember.

Christian: [19:35](#)

Um, it is so fun, right? But my six year old, out of nowhere, I was like, I really wish your mom was here. I bet she would play dominoes with us. And I said, number one, you're 100% right. And number number two, I wish she was here too, right? And

bringing all of that stuff down off the shelf at the high, high shelf that things we can't talk about. But having it be part of our family conversation in a way that is sometimes really complicated is hard. And I didn't tell my kids about how my mom died until I knew what had happened. Because your grandma got murdered and we don't know who did it, is a very different conversation for a small child. Then your grandma got murdered and that person is in jail and they're never getting out.

- JJ: [20:22](#) That's a different conversation for you though, too, with the person who hurt my mom, we don't know who or why--
- Liz: [20:29](#) But they don't hold it as trauma. I mean, that's the interesting thing and it's the grace that I try to give other people in that in those conversations is that I'm, I'm probably the person holding it as trauma. They're holding it as loss or as sadness or as, uh, maybe anger, but they're holding it as trauma. And so that's okay.
- Christian: [20:51](#) Yeah, that's fine.
- Liz: [20:52](#) It's good in a way because it allows me to be more generous in those conversations in moments when I maybe don't want to be here.
- Christian: [20:59](#) Yeah. They definitely, kids catch on earlier than you would think on, on some of that stuff too.
- Liz: [21:04](#) Right.
- Christian: [21:04](#) So I can I, my niece when she was, uh, gosh, I mean really too young to be talking as much as she was or to have a thought like this. She got one picture of my mom and her room and they say, it's your Gammy angel, you know, is that the time, is what they're saying, but they haven't explained a ton or whatever. And one day we're in the back and she just starts crying saying that she misses her Gammy angel and that she just wishes she was here so she could hug her so she could give her a hug. And it's not a conversation that like my brother had had with her or my sister in law. It was, this is just something that is her truth. And I like, I don't know where it comes from and she, I don't think has a full understanding of death at the time or in certainly we hadn't gotten into the story. But you know, you have to, there's a reason why your grandma's not here and explaining some of that. And, and I just think it's wild how the

ripple effect of that is very real too. And, and kids pick up on early.

Liz: [22:05](#) It's an interesting thing having kids and not having living parents. Um, because you know, there's not anybody in their lives to say like, "Oh, you used to do that." Right? You know, like, "Oh, that looks just like what you used to do." Um, and there are other people that knew me when I was a little kid, but nobody knows you...and I know now as a parent, like I feel like there are ways in which I know my kids that are there are specific to being their mom. And so there's just, my kids know me in a different way than they might otherwise because there's not anybody saying, "don't let your mom give you a hard time about that. When she was seven, she was doing whatever." It's just a funny, it's a funny thing that takes those ripples and tests those different shapes and it's sort of like, Oh, okay. I didn't really, I wasn't really thinking about loss today, but here we are.

Christian: [22:53](#) Yeah there is, like there's no rhyme or reason which like all of a sudden you just have these feelings and you're like, where and though, and we've talked about this, but like meditation has been really helpful for me to like help hone in on stuff that I was leaving really unchecked and I didn't jump right in the work. I, we, the first year, I will say when I first got involved, one of the first survivors I met with Suzanne Verge, she's the President of the chapter in Los Angeles. Her brother was killed in this really awful shooting and um, has been doing this work for a very long time. First person my dad met and they went down and got coffee. It was about six months later and he's gone through a decent amount of his recovery at this point and the physical and uh, he sits down with her and they start going through everything.

Christian: [23:37](#) And you know, they share some tears and some stories and, and he says, "what do I need to do? Let me get involved, let me fix this thing. Let me, we got, we got to do more." And Suzanne looked at him and said, "Tim, I am here for you. I, anytime you want to get coffee, we'll, we'll come and do this. If you're really adamant about it, I'll, I'll, there's certainly stuff you can do." She's like, I really think you need to take some more time and you need to heal and you need to, I mean, you'll never be fully healed, but you need to take some time to really address what's going on. And it was, you know, I call it the one of the single greatest kindnesses we came across at the time. Because you look at some of the survivors today and especially when it's high profile and you get thrown right into this world, you never,

Liz: [24:21](#) I can't imagine doing it that way. I can't .

Speaker 4: [24:24](#) They don't get the chance, you know?

JJ: [24:27](#) Yeah, you're expected to be on CNN the next day with talking points.

Christian: [24:31](#) And when do you have time to truly sit back and realize how much your life will never be the same. You know, you're, you transitioned to something else, but it's still very much living in the past as opposed to your present and--

Liz: [24:47](#) Well, and even I, I mean I took, you know, gosh, um, a year really before I started even thinking about what I wanted to do with it because I was really focused on um, okay, the, the shape and the kind of weight of um, this loss, not knowing what was going on and then being in about a year of pretrial and then being in the trial. Like it feels a certain way.

Christian: [25:10](#) Yeah.

Liz: [25:12](#) Um, okay, how much of this weight am I still carrying? How much of it did I just drop when we figured out what happened? What does and what, how does it feel on my shoulders? What's going on? What does that mean? And I needed every minute of that year to, to do that work. And, you know, hold down a job and, you know, be a, a human being in the world cause life doesn't stop now. God, I was, I was 26 when my mom was killed and I was 37 when her murderer was convicted. So I'm now 42 and I'm, I mean, I was thinking about this this morning actually in preparation for this conversation, but you know, it's a huge chunk of my life, um, that she missed. You know, I'm not the same person. I wouldn't have been anyway. I'm definitely not now. Um, it's just a different deal and giving, I mean it's 100% why I run and---

Christian: [26:11](#) Well, finding that is really important. Whatever that outlet is.

Liz: [26:15](#) Yeah.

JJ: [26:15](#) How do you have a work life balance? Because no one here, Brady seems to have an appropriate work life balance because everyone works a metric ton here. But just if something almost is like a vocation, if it's something that you're super passionate about, but if this is also something that is a massive and defining moment in your life and it's also your job...

Liz: [26:33](#) Um, the biggest difference that, and the thing that feels really good about being here is just, it's coherence back to like the authentic experience, right? That we're having sitting on the floor. Um, but, but it means that all of, um, the energy that I start with every day is generally speaking, pointed in the same direction. It's not, there's no drag. Okay. Um, right. So I'm, I'm doing the work that I'm doing and I'm going to do it as, as well as I can and as hard as I can for as long as I can.

Liz: [27:06](#) And it matches the experiences that I've had. I don't have to mask them. I don't have to minimize them. I don't have to ignore them. They're just there all the time and they would be anyway. So it's for me about how can I be whole coherent, healthy person. That's a good example to my, my smalls as I like to call them.

JJ: [27:31](#) Um, and you have very good smalls.

Liz: [27:32](#) I have great smalls. They're the best. But you know, I didn't really tell them about any of this until I was running the marathon, in part because I wanted their takeaway to be, I did something. So I'm doing something that seems good.

Christian: [27:47](#) That is pretty good. Yeah. And you got awesome. Uh, awards for it from your side?

Liz: [27:52](#) Yes. I, yeah, I get, I mean, every time I run a race, I do get, sometimes they're perler bead medals. Um, sometimes they're signs, but yeah.

JJ: [28:01](#) And I was going to say, it's not like you, you haven't stopped running.

Christian: [28:03](#) No. Since, no, I run here. When you go through hard things and use zoom out and think about them, then when you find things that you like and make you happy, you feel pretty unapologetic about doing that.

Christian: [28:16](#) We're not always doing great and this work doesn't always make it easy. Over the years I have sometimes it's helpful, right? So sometimes, um, being able to interact with so many people like Liz, um, to get close with, um, that understand what it's like to be a survivor of gun violence is helps because we can go and get lunch or you know, get a beer and, and we don't even have to talk about what's going on. But just being there together, there's a camaraderie that helps when things are tough. Right? Like at the gala the other night when things were very heavy, I

looked over. That's where we like helped a lot to be able to look over and see, um, a friend who understood, um, you know, that there was more going on than just the room. So, you know, I think there's that.

Christian: [29:15](#) I think, so, it's not always perfect. I have gotten better at but have not perfected, um, understanding when I am not doing well and when I do need to get away and when I do need whatever outlet it is for me. And we've talked about this before, but for me it's golf as silly as it sounds. Um, I, you know, cause I get to, you know, if having a bunch of crazy weeks, sometimes I'll, I'll blast out and I'll go play around by myself during the day. I'll, I walk, I will, you know, maybe listen to music, maybe just listen to nature, uh, not really think about anything other than what I'm doing. And I will get a break for five hours to be out in the wilderness, so to speak. And for me that is a very important and reset button for me. You know, meditation's helped.

Liz: [30:06](#) And it would be if you weren't doing this work. I mean that's the, that's the trick is that the experiences is invisible as you're walking around town. So yeah. So you're really the one you have to be vigilant with, which is still tricky. Um, yeah, I find, I mean this time of year is challenging for me because of the anniversary coming up. Um, and it really caught me off guard because Thanksgiving is so late this year. And so usually I have like two weeks between Thanksgiving and the anniversary of my mom's murder, which is a good amount of time. And so, yeah. So like late last week, early this week, I was thinking like, oh, why is it feeling so off when it's not even Thanksgiving, its like what's up? Oh right. Yeah. But it's almost that time.

Christian: [30:56](#) Yeah. Mine cause I get mother's day and it'd be Memorial day. It's, there's the 30th, which is the actual day. And then Memorial day almost never falls on the 30th so it compiles and, and yeah, it's really random too. Cause some years it's fine. And then like I can remember like one of the worst ones I had was the seventh anniversary. And I thought I had it licked, you know, I was like, "Oh, got it figured out and we're all good." And then like, yeah, we're in the midst of it. So yeah. So I mean I guess,

Liz: [31:24](#) Well and then the funny things you insist on. So I am very clear with my husband, who's a champ. Um, that's like, you know, we've got to get the Christmas tree up. Like the Christmas tree has to be up before December 5th. Like it needs to be decorated, the lights need to be on it, we're going to get a real tree. So it's probably crispy on Christmas and or the day after. And like that's just something that you have to live with forever.

Christian: [31:49](#) Shout out to spouses, who put up with our weird idiosyncrasies. And I mean, yeah, cause I honestly like, I mean, yeah, having Kim, you know, be able to gut check me without her in my life, I would not have known when I was lashing out, I would not have realized that like some of the depression and anxiety and things that are completely normal responses are even things that I was experiencing, you know, because and, and to be able to have somebody to be so understanding and caring and frankly like we talked about the ripple effect, you know, she's dealing with that in a way that it's now part of her story to right and visible to the naked eye.

Liz: [32:34](#) Exactly.

Christian: [32:36](#) Yeah. So I think that is also important.

Liz: [32:38](#) Having a good team of people around you, good team is, is key. Um, the smalls are very helpful because they just don't care. Um, and, and you know, in all the really important ways, right. It's like I still would really appreciate it if you would pour me a bowl of cereal and yeah, no, that's too much milk or whatever. And my Cheerio are like an immediacy. I mean, kids are in the present moment and that's a gift and it's a big, it's a big gift. It's hard. It's, it's, it's better to hang out with them. I have two guys, uh, one-on-one maybe if I'm having a tough day because I can then really focus and really be on the present and present instead of navigating, refereeing, negotiating. That's, those are harder things to do.

JJ: [33:20](#) Yeah.

Liz: [33:20](#) But I have two children, so I do them. I do them anyway.

JJ: [33:26](#) Has it been helpful for you two, the sort of the survivor networks that you meet through Brady? Because what I'm hearing is sort of like things at the gala and things like that is that there's, there's like a language of survivorship that I'm not fluent in and that unless you're unfortunate enough to have gone through it, you're not going to be fluent in.

Christian: [33:45](#) Yeah. I mean, for me it's, it's been a huge, uh, uh, I, I have, you know, when I first moved to DC even going back, you know, Amanda Wilcox, who is, I think one of the most incredible survivor advocates I've ever met. That story I told earlier about Suzanne Verge. And then when I moved out here in D C there was a, uh, Colin Goddard was working in radio at the time. He was shot four times at Virginia tech. Uh, Omar Samaha. Um, his

sister Reema was killed at Virginia Tech, and we all got into the movement about the same time in here in D C. and so we have formed like a very cool relationship, especially cause there were not a lot of young people at the time doing the work. And, um, we've been at, all of us have been at each other's weddings, you know, like we'd get together. Um, regardless of what they're doing. Now there are, there's this camaraderie and like I said when I was talking earlier about some of that unspoken, those unspoken moments is that oftentimes when things are the worst, we'll call each other and we'll get together, we'll do something, but we don't even necessarily need to talk about what's going on.

- Liz: [34:50](#) One of the most important experiences in that category for me was, you know, during the year of pretrial proceedings and then the six weeks of trial, there were two other families. Um, and you know, you're in the same little room, the courtroom, and then there's, you know, the room where everybody puts their stuff and it's kind of a weird traumatic summer camp where you're seeing each other every day and having lunch in the cafeteria. Um, and it's...
- JJ: [35:16](#) surreal.
- Liz: [35:17](#) It is 100% surreal. Um, it is a strange cause you're there long enough to have routines and to know the people that work there and to sort of have it be your daily life, even though it's gonna stop and that doesn't, that's not what continues to happen. Um, but I've, through the, the magic of social media have stayed in touch with several of those folks and watched them have their own paths and journeys with all of this and figuring out how to carry it.
- Liz: [35:46](#) Their progress was a little bit different just because they didn't have to wait. Um, so they've been able to put their voice to work in a different way. That's been really cool to see. So, yeah. Yeah. It's just neat. It's neat. It's neat to see people in the GVP related stuff. But then also just, oh, I see you. Oh, you had a baby. Oh, hooray. Oh that baby's real cute or whatever. And to see life continuing, um, for people you care about is really great.
- JJ: [36:14](#) Is there a question that people rarely ask you that you wish that they asked or something that you wish people knew about gun violence or gun violence prevention or just your life?
- Liz: [36:26](#) I mean, my people, my people ask me about my mom and they never ask about my dad. Um, my dad, I th-- I mean the theory of the crime until somebody else was indicted was that my dad

had hired somebody to kill my mom. And you know, the town that we grew up in and that he served didn't treat him very well and he didn't survive. Um, but in a way that everybody is very keen to talk about my mom, you know, my dad is a victim too and big time and so--

- Christian: [36:55](#) Well and even if, if I can say like it's another part of your victimhood too or you know, like your story isn't that he was taken from you and not really--
- Liz: [37:05](#) Yeah. And he didn't make it. I mean, and they acknowledge it right after the verdict and that he wasn't alive to be fully exonerated. Um, which was actually nice of them to say it out loud 'cause it was on my mind and it's what I said to on, um, the day of that verdict. But you know, that's the part and I think it's a really interesting thing carrying the life experiences that I do is that it makes people uncomfortable. And so that's the part of the discomfort that in some ways it's still too much for a lot of people to interact with because those are all good people, right? They're all really good people who've done a lot of really good things. And my dad couldn't go to the grocery store without people whispering and he left town.
- Liz: [37:55](#) Um, and I don't know what I would have done.
- Christian: [37:59](#) Right.
- Liz: [38:00](#) 'Cause you always hope you would be this strong committed friend who would really see through whatever you were being fed and really connect. I hope so. But that part is often still complicated, too complicated for people to talk about. Except right now sitting on the floor.
- Christian: [38:19](#) Being uncomfortable is a theme.
- Liz: [38:23](#) I think actually it's a real professional asset, being able to hold somebody else's discomfort and not, not not at all, um, leverage it or try to exacerbate it or amplify it or anything like that. But being okay with the fact that somebody else is uncomfortable is a requirement or you can never talk about yourself.
- Christian: [38:46](#) Yeah. And to this day I still struggle with that. Right? Like I like pivoting because I don't want to spend like my time making somebody else feel better about my tragedy, you know, like, which is what you end up doing a lot right after. And, and I, I'm like with regards to some of the things that are, I think unique in

that space is like, and, and I, I guess it's not unique to loss in general, but you know, all of these things when you hear like--

- Liz: [39:13](#) So it's just tricky. So we have it all the time.
- Christian: [39:17](#) Yeah.
- Christian: [39:18](#) Or, or we opt out of it because you're thinking like, Oh, I met a child's birthday party and I've just met you. So---
- Christian: [39:26](#) Sometimes we were so well intentioned to say are, do say the exact thing that you don't want to hear at all. Right. Like, like, like this happened for a reason or they're in a better place.
- Liz: [39:39](#) Or when God closes the door, he opens a window.
- JJ: [39:41](#) Which, to quote Garfunkel and Oates, that's a smaller opening. The window may have been opened, but the door was the optimal way out.
- Christian: [39:51](#) I mean really, and that, that is,
- Liz: [39:55](#) And it's okay. I mean, I don't
- Christian: [39:56](#) Learning that is the one, that's the one thing that I've, that we've had to learn and probably why I think it's easy to talk, but it is, it becomes like a, Oh, Liz. Like when we met. Oh, that's awful. And that's it. You don't need is terrible. And that's, that's all you have to say sometimes I don't like I, yeah, I, I think like being in this space, it's, that's the one thing that is therapeutic, if anything. And I will say too, cause there's lots of survivors that have taken a completely different track who also don't, you know, even in our shooting, um, friends and family who have very different views and very different reactions. Who, who lost people, you know, who had the same thing. And, and I don't want to negate or take away from, from their reaction or what they, because that's their experience too. And, and exactly. And so the specifically finding people in, in our, in our world who have reacted, um, the same way has been a, has been a, an important part of my life since.
- Liz: [40:56](#) And in terms of the work, it's interesting because I was talking with a couple of colleagues the other day about how to think about this work. And I, when I talk to donors about our work, I almost always start with a hundred people a day. And I break it down and I say, okay, there's this many people shot and killed a day and these are the kinds of gun deaths there are. And then I

talk about Brady's programs, analog to different kinds of gun violence. And I do that because I'm, I'm focused on the people who are joining a club, right. That the club that nobody wants to join and acknowledging that the impact of my work is going to be people whose names never know and who you know it's right. It's the parents who locked up the gun and so their kid didn't find it and, and didn't shoot himself and, and family fire the number. That doesn't have to be recorded. It's the number. It's the names that never make the news. It's the families that I'll never run into.

Christian: [41:50](#) That's interesting because I find that my advocacy, it took me a long time to, my pitch to legislators is the opposite is not that for, cause you're right. Like, these are a hundred, you know, and it's to make the same point of like all these people, I will never know their names because it's not the, what we see on TV and I'll never know them, but also like, I want to make this very clear, this is not an abstract number, which one of those hundred people like are like me and, and it's a real chair and Thanksgiving and it'll be a chair next year too.

Christian: [42:23](#) My, my wife, my mom, my mom will never have the opportunity to meet my wife. They'll never have a conversation. You know, like my, uh, nieces will never, my mom will never be able to hold her grandchildren, you know, like that's like, like the reason why that hundred, you know, daily toll is so horrific is like that's true for every single one of those people. And there's a host of people who like my dad are living with bullet fragments in them after the fact, and they have to learn how to recover with that after watching his, the love of his life be murdered in front of him. And then to have the papers write things like wrong place, wrong time.

JJ: [43:05](#) Yeah.

Christian: [43:05](#) You know, and, and things like that. It's just that the cliches go on and on.

Liz: [43:08](#) But yeah, I think that's a really important, but it's like, you know, the person who, so when my kids were very, very small, you're up in the middle of the night and often you're up really for, you don't know why, right. Somebody's right. Somebody's like, there's the sun, something's happening. Are they hungry? Do they, I know it said diaper, like, what's happening? Right. Something's happening. They need a cup of water. And you think, you know, Oh man, I wish I could call my mom even if I waited until inappropriate time of day to do so. And so when I do this work, I think by virtue of the impact of our work, who

gets to call their mom? Who, who gets to call their mom? I don't ever get to call mine, right? That's off the table, regardless of whether I do this work tomorrow and we're not. Um, and so that's all like, that's a good point. That's always what I'm thinking about. Who gets to call their mom or so many people who don't have to go through, who don't have to be in this weird little club, not so little club...

Christian: [44:06](#) That's the mantra, right? Right after the shooting happened, it was if we can do all of this and even if we just save a life, if that, cause that's not just one person, it's that entire community of people that are forever impacted because of that single bullet. If you can prevent that one time happening, then you know, and that's all I did then you know, it was worth it. Right? So to look at the statistics and the public health research around how effective these policies are that we advocate for, it really is an amazing thing that we are able to make sure that more grandmothers are able to hold their grand babies right now, more people are able to call their mother at night. I think that's an important thing not to lose sight of because, uh, the research shows us that it's working. That's the drive.

JJ: [45:03](#) The drive is the drive. What's, what's one thing that listeners can do? So if people have listened beyond, call their mom and go out and be present and hug the people in their life that they love. What's, what's something that,

Christian: [45:15](#) Well, I don't want to minimize that and I will say that, and I know you're not, um, at all. Um, but I, but I will say that on the, on the, if there's one like human thing that everybody should do is like, if you love somebody, tell them, you know, like the one incredible gift that I can certainly say right now that I have always been able to lean on and is a real comfort to me is that the last words that, um, we yelled at each other as I was heading out the door to go wakeboard for the weekend and avoid a, you know, family trip with my parents. Right. Was uh, we told each other we loved each other and it was after a tough conversation. Right? Yeah. I, that is invaluable. You know, I, it is so, I mean like you can't say it enough to the people you care about.

Christian: [45:59](#) It's one thing that our family has been really adamant about, making sure that we tell everybody because you don't realize you're on borrowed time until it slaps in the face and you see it firsthand. So I don't want to minimize that, but I also will say show up. You know, we, we have so much, this movement has changed so dramatically over the last, uh, since even since I've been here, but even longer than that. Right? And, and we are at

a place right now where it has never been a better time to be active in gun violence prevention. You look at what just happened in Virginia, we get a great episode about it.

- Christian: [46:37](#) I only shout out my own episodes, uh, hashtag replace replace JP. I will say that, um, it is a really exciting time to do this work because everywhere we go, there are people there. And the only way we continue to make the change that we're seeing is if people show up. It may seem like a small thing to show up, to, uh, write letters or phone bank or even just show up to a rally or create a sign or, or shoot a text or an email. All of those things are so vitally important and is what has changed this movement. So keep doing it. Keep showing up. No matter how big or small, anytime you get a chance to step outside your comfort zone. Um, if people are willing to do that, I think we will, we will make a difference.
- Liz: [47:23](#) Um, just keep showing him so analogous. Um, so absolutely be grateful. So wake up, look around, think about who you have, think about what you have and find a way to be grateful for it. And then alongside that, think about what you can give. I mean, you're, you're right. This is the best time. This is an incredible moment. Um, and it's what you can give his time, what you can give as energy. What you can give is money. Um, give what you can give. Um, we are not the only organization in the GVP space for sure. Um, this movement needs our attention. It needs our resources, it needs our commitment and it needs it. Right now we have people talking about gun violence in public that never have before. It's part of every conversation. Um, and so it's appropriate to think that this might be the moment where things change, but it's not going to do it unless we force it.
- JJ: [48:22](#) All right. Well, Liz, Christian, thank you so much for, for coming on and talking to me today. Thank you for sitting on my dirty floor and my podcast and deeply appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you. Should we do a cheers?
- All: [48:34](#) Cheers.
- All: [48:36](#) ***clink glasses***.
- Christian: [48:36](#) Nice.
- Brady music: [48:40](#) ***music plays**
- JJ: [48:41](#) And now it's time for our unbelievable story of the week. Yinz all loved the saga last week of the amazing snowbank gun, so I'm

back with another true crime story, and I've got to say these ones are starting to become as fun for me as I think they are for all of you. Now this story is something else. I don't really know how to describe it, which is bad because that's my job. But basically this--a Pennsylvania man was recently sentenced to prison. That's not shocking, but the why of the arrest is interesting. He's going to prison because he shot his unlicensed gun into the air. Which, one, don't do that. Don't own a gun you're not allowed to have. Don't shoot it into the air. General rules. Uh, gravity means that that bullet must come down and it can have devastating consequences. But what was in the air that he needed to shoot at fireflies? Fireflies that he thought were alien lasers. I'm going to pause for a minute there. Alien lasers. Granted, was he on bath salts? Yes, but bath salts aren't an excuse for poor firearm safety and a rather good reason why this particular individual shouldn't have had a gun in the first place.

Brady music: [49:54](#) ***music plays***

JJ: [49:56](#) This week's GVP hero is something really special, as nominated by Elaine R from Rockingham, North Carolina, and I'm hope I'm pronouncing that right. This week's GVP hero is everyone who is cognizant enough to participate in end family fire initiatives while traveling and visiting folks for the holidays. She specifically said that we should be giving our GVP hero of the week award out to everyone who has sort of the tough conversation and participates with end family fire initiatives this holiday season. So if you're going out there, if you're going into a new home, if you're visiting with new people, make sure that you ask. And by ask what do I mean? I mean talk to your family, your friends, members of the community. If you're going to your partner's house for the very first time and you're at the like friend of a friend of a friend of cousins' houses. These things sometimes happen over holidays, you know, ask, "is there an unlocked gun in your home?" So Elaine, thank you so much for writing in and hey everybody out there, thank you. Congratulations on being a GVP hero for being willing to have these conversations.

Brady music: [51:04](#) ***music plays***

Christian: [51:04](#) Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's lifesaving work in Congress, the courts, and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you and for a very special holiday ask: Tuesday, December 3rd is giving Tuesday, and I hope you'll think of Brady and make a gift by going to Brady united.org back slash pod cash. Thank you all so much. Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.

Brady music:

[51:46](#)

music plays.

Disclaimer:

[51:46](#)

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