[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. [MUSIC] Hello everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from the HR department at HLS. My pronouns are he, him, his and today we're talking with Carey Andersen from the Facilities Management Department who will tell us about her life. How long she is in this HLS position and the work she does? Thank you for joining us Carey, and tell us your story.

Thank you for having me, Edgar. I'm a local Massachusetts girl. I grew up in this area. My family still lives in the area. I define myself as a mom, as a spouse, as a daughter, a sister, a friend, a colleague. I also identify myself as someone that has multiple sclerosis. Something that is a challenge to my life and my work life. But that I've used very much in the last few years as a way that I looked as COVID has something that I came in prepared for because I never know what to expect any day to give me. A lot of people were dealing with that for the first time when COVID came into our lives.

Carey, I know you for a while and I don't want to jump into where I know you from. You're going to tell you more about that later in terms of work. I didn't know that. Thank you very much for sharing. If you want to tell us more, not in terms of how you found out, but how you are feeling? How is this news impacted you, impacted your life or your work? What's the process that you are going through if that's okay with you.

Well, I'm very fortunate to live where I do because I feel like I have the very best medical support around me.

Yes. Which is very important.

Part of why I live here. I was diagnosed in 2003. It was the year after my marriage. It came as quite a surprise. It wasn't something that I'd ever had symptoms as a young person. I had a couple of dark years. I had a few years where I just didn't know how to move forward and how to use that information and work through it. But I have a great family and I found a great employer.

Which is amazing.

Yeah.

When did you start at Harvard?

I started in 2007.

2007?

Yeah, and I've been here for 15 years.

Fifteen years.

I started with the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society.

That's what I remember you. [LAUGHTER] Yes.

I started really as the person that answered the phones and helped support the office. Tried to help people succeed administratively with whatever they had at hand.

Calling facilities like everybody else and saying, hey can you do this?

Little bit faculty assistants.

[LAUGHTER] Yeah.

Little bit research center assistant, a little bit managing director assistant, I wore a lot of hats. But I developed some wonderful friendships and a great sense of community there and I stayed for 12 years before I was attracted to the other side of the work that I was doing and then the opportunity to do more of it.

Then you transition from Berkman Client Center to?

To the Facilities Department.

What attracted you to the position in Facilities?

The Berkman Klein Center had the opportunity to relocate to the newly renovated Lewis Hall. And back in 2017, the Facilities Department and the designers of the space reached out to Berkman and said, we need someone to represent to help us understand what your needs are in the new space. What's the number of offices you need that are private? How open the space need? How many meetings spaces do you need? I got to be a part of that direction. I got to be the voice of Berkman Klein.

Working at Berkman, helping with the renew of Lewis International Library and then?

Then I got to know John Arciprete and Gene O’Connor pretty well through that process. I enjoyed working with them very much. One day I was at an unveiling of Lewis Hall to the staff. It was a social Tuesdays attend, I think. Gene was there talking about Lewis and the dean was showing some renditions and I would talk to Gene and then he said, well, that's why we have a project manager position open right now because we have so much work going on. Because I was wondering how he was getting all the different multiple projects he was working on done and I said really? [LAUGHTER]

[NOISE] Ring the bell. That's how you applied and then I think this is a fascinating story because you are working for Berkman, having them kind of a study or researchers. I don't know what name to prepare the Lewis space where Berkman is sitting right now, right?

At the time I was there events and operations manager.

Wow.

I was managing and hosting all of the events. I wasn't providing the content, but I was helping people put together an event that gave the world a preview of what they want to share.

Very interesting.

I supported Berkman by on the regular. We were a very interesting organization. Too many people in a small space. About every 6 months I played the puzzle game where everyone had to relocate. We had people coming in, we have people going out. We were always trying to accommodate. That small puzzle I now sometimes play on the large-scale campus of Harvard Law School, where we have to look at space, and be careful about how we use it and smart about how we use it.

Then describe to me what's the position that you have now at facilities and what the scope of the work that you do?

Sure.

Because I think that's also a really interesting story in terms of the job that you do.

The opportunities I have now are just to me a lot of fun. What I'm doing is really interesting to me. I support when we have construction going on, there will be portions of the construction that I'll support. Whether it's coming up with the contracts and the budgets and the scheduling. Putting together the team for the bids, working with architects and designers to come up with something that we approve as law school and at the university level. Then getting back to the actual starting of the project. Lewis is not something that I was very hands-on, but little portions of it I got to support. Then I got to move the entire Berkman Klein Center and the Cyberlaw Clinic and Library Innovation Lab into the new space. Work with the people that I had worked side-by-side with as someone that was the liaison to the law school because I knew them and I knew what their needs were and I could help them get settled into the new space.

Was that a lab? [LAUGHTER]

To me that was like full circle.

Yes.

I started out with them, helping them figure out what they needed and then in the end, I helped move them into the space and see them get settled and knew they were okay.

But the same time that your job at Berkman was a complete different one.

Right.

The need that Berkman have for a space triggered the possibility to move to Lewis that was going to be renewed.

Right.

They choose you to take a look because you knew the difficulties to place people back and forth every year. You go there to study the space and see what would it be a better fit for everyone. At same time that there's an opportunity is open of Facilities. What I feel is like it's one of those situations that you say, my God, the universe is conspiring here for the good cause.

[LAUGHTER] Right.

You were having a learning curve somehow in what you are doing to Lewis.

There is so much to learn in the fields that is Facilities. The amount of things that the department that I'm now part of supports is, you know from a personal experience this law school functions because we have buildings that are in wonderful shape. We have people that pay attention to every little detail and we keep it operating all the time.

Also what I think is interesting and I wanted you talk more about this is one question that I don't want to forget now we're talking about this is, how these requests comes. The one from Berkman I know already came from Berkman internally saying we're going to have a chance to move to a different building. I would like you to go down and take a look at the space. How you can organize everything in our group to move?

Right.

That's what's your lab training to prepare for this new position, which I think is fascinating. Then when you are in facilities out of these experiences, how other departments reach out? They go through the general channel sending a mail to front desk or they reach out to John Arciprete or Gene or just say, hey we want to do this.

It happens in a variety of ways.

Yeah.

One of the big things that I just supported with some reorganization of the clinical space. It came from the clinical and Pro Bono Program having communication with all the people in their department and understanding what their priorities were. They had three clinics that really we're in too tight of space and needed the first attention. The first wave of my support to that office was to help come up with ways for them to move and what would be the right mix, who should move and where should they move? And we came up with some options. We work together as a group and now they're all comfortably settled in their new locations.

Not just internally. That also happened with the new building in the corner. Well famous, we know now that where Stokes is.

Yes.

Everybody have a better sense. That building was also built with the organization and management with.

Yeah, I mean sometimes these plans are years in the making before you'll see them sort of start to happen.

A lot of planning and feasibility studies go into the decision-making that the facilities department helps administration make.

Yeah.

Now it's we're often the information suppliers to help good decisions.

Yeah.

Part of the way we do that is some of the things that I manage. I manage something called Center Stone. It is a repository of all of the CAD plans of every building across our campus, each floor and we maintain that and we keep it accurate, so we know we can share information to the people that we need to deploy out to space is to repair things.

Which is a very important.

We can use it as directional information.

Yeah.

These floor plans are used in a variety of different ways to support the administration and the Facilities of the law school. Yeah.

They are being constantly updates, so do you have the most.

Constantly. Yeah.

Another aspect of the work that you do with Gene O’Connor is the material that is used for ever construction every year with the technology that comes in the needs for more environmental friendly and energy savings and all that. That's also taking consideration and how it's.

It's amazing.

What I've learned has kind of been extremely eye-opening that Harvard leads the way in this green building in this area and that people, vendors and distributors and suppliers that we've been working with for years have shifted slightly towards the products they know Harvard is going to purchase.

That's fascinating.

We follow HHI, which is the Healthier Hospitals Initiative. We aim in all new buildings to put in furniture that is healthy for you to breathe. It's not toxins in it. That is healthy for you. Carpeting that is not giving off anything. Lot of things that you buy online these days might be inexpensive, but it's probably not healthy for you to have in your home.

That's a very important piece of information right there in terms of sometimes you see these products being all over advertised always. That would be awesome. Looks, it's cheap, but you have no idea what you're bringing to your house, your office. Yeah.

Yeah, and that's something that we have transparency into and that we pay a lot of attention to. Not to mention, Lewis is got an HVAC system that makes the air go through that building in ways that is healthier circumstances of COVID. It was a lot of thought put into that. I think that's the direction Harvard in general is heading across all of them.

I thought the system for WCC when we were just installed because we have it the whole.

Exactly.

Air circulation and everything else that comes that's already installed for this beyond the size of it. Then now you're saying that there is even a more modern one dedicated to Lewis in consideration.

I think there are always improving.

Yeah. That's what the technologies are.

Their support across Harvard to do that, we have Green Building Services that's out of central and Environmental Health and Safety out of Harvard central, there are built-in supports to support the schools to make healthy and smart decisions.

This I think is also an important aspect of, because it takes entire, of course, Harvard University leading in the group of the green. A group that deals with all these projects are managing away or give support orientation and everything else prbably with all the policies that are in place as well. But in each of the product like facilities having Gene you working together and being Facilities in general, the entire department thinking the same level to make this improvements happen and having this progress coming. I think it is so important. This is another aspect of this conversation that we're having that I wonder how many people in our campus, campus know what is done or what kind of work you, Gene and Facilities are putting out there.

Right.

We just see the beautiful building in the corner of whenever seated in a park.

Part of doing a really good job at HLS is being visible. I've done that for many years. Part of putting on a good event is that everyone comes and everything is set the way they want. The food's not a problem. The registration table is not a line. Then they're in the event and they're enjoying the event and when they leave, they don't have comments because everything went smooth and they didn't see anything. All the difficult stuff was invisible and that's the way it's supposed to be.

Yeah.

That's how these buildings run. You don't see very much. Occasionally you might see a mechanical guy walking [LAUGHTER] through the hallway [LAUGHTER], but for the most part, it's magical.

Yeah. But on our end, this is your beautiful job. The responsibility that you have everything going smooth as much as you can deal with all the parts that you have to be moving around. But on our end, we need to make it known, I think is important to recognize the professionals that are doing their best for the campus to function, for everything, to be in perfection the way that it is. When you have all the events that you have here, the important names that comes to this community, the orientation or the culminating with the commencement in the end, everything runs well when everybody is happy. But we need to start showing who are the real players behind this. Because that's important and that's why I really want you to talk to you. Other things in terms of our department have a change. You would describe more or less already based on Beckman Center experience. You are going to talk to all of them, see their needs and then from this conversation in your own, on the other side, the scheduling and materials and everything that's possible will be a constant conversation in terms of you're asked him it is, we can possibly offer you this, and then you meet midway to see what works best.

Being open to suggestions and listening is a huge part of my job and sometimes saying no because we have to make.

Not everything.

Well, not everything is possible.

Can be done the way that is requested. Yes, I understand that too. Were you part of the library renovation as well?

I came in at the tail end and I was lucky to be there when we were doing commissioning, which is the checking of the systems to make sure everything was effective and working. There's so many layers to construction. It was important that I started to have exposure quick because it was going to be a quick learning road. [LAUGHTER]. But the only way really I think too, I had the skill set for the management part of it and the interaction with people. What I had to learn was how it's done and the construction world different from other settings.

I want to go back now that we've talked about the time when we started, while you are doing here, and go back to the experience that you are having right now in terms of the multiple sclerosis. Have you found the support that you need to deal with the?

I think I have. I've been pretty open with people about my illness because I want it to be something that doesn't define me, but that it's an awareness. I want to talk about it more openly because I don't want to be uncomfortable talking about it and I don't want other people to get uncomfortable hearing me talk about it.

Which is wonderful. It is really is.

I have to say I wasn't always this way. I've been fearful to share this information in the past.

Yeah.

But I'm living with it and making do with it and it does impact me and it's okay to talk about it. I also have a 13-year-old child at home who I don't want to be scared of it and I want to raise him with an awareness similar to what I want the other people around me to have.

I think it's important because it's the reality of my life.

It is. I'm so happy in a way for you to be sharing this information with us because I think one of the main things that now the visible disabilities that we talk so much. Somehow people might feel like, I understand that because I see it. But the invisible ones are the ones that are more complicated. In many circumstances, the person feels like you said in the past, you are afraid of disclosing this, or talking about this because of the judgment or the lack of understanding if this was even real or not. Not knowing what it means, what is the side effects or the symptoms of everything. I think we are living in a moment, even past COVID right now. There are so many new.

What we could put into the realm of invisible disability that is exacerbated because of the COVID and the whole circumstance that we went through: the isolation, the fear, the not knowing what was going to happen. We still need to go a long way to try to help other folks and let them feel comfortable to come forward and say, "I deal with this. I don't want this to define me, but I would appreciate any support that I can because I'm going through this." So I think you are doing such an amazing, amazing job by saying what it is facing this and letting other people know that. You are here doing a phenomenal job with everything. I know you from forever and I didn't know about that. I'm sorry that I didn't and I wish I would be able to be talking to you much earlier. But I remember when I was in Facilities, talk to you on the phone when you were pregnant with your child, and all excited about this. Then I remember the pictures and you have Red Sox [LAUGHTER] gear and everything else, and that was a wonderful way to participate. That's what I remember most in terms of our connection with the workers in that. Could you tell me more in terms of dealing with the multiple sclerosis and when you were able to open up with whoever you're working with?

I think I just became more confident in who I was. I'm going to be 49 soon, I'm not young. I've been living with it since 2003, that's 19 years,

and I'm not ashamed. I get up every day and I work hard and I'm very fortunate that my health is in a state that it hasn't slowed me down yet. If I can put one foot in front of the other today, I better keep doing it because there may be a day where I can't. There have been days that I couldn't and those were scary, but I figure out the coping mechanisms and sometimes I don't have all of the coping mechanisms. My body's used up all my patience, and in those days, I call my manager and I say I need a day off. I need to rest or I need to recover, and I've always gotten great support from HLS when I was at Berkman and now at the Facilities department. If I needed a day off to go to the doctors, I've had that time and I've never felt like anything prevented me from paying attention to my family and my health. Those are two priorities in addition to my work life.

Freedom to be able to talk about this and figure out mechanisms and support, and ways to go through in any step that you have to.

Like you said, it's invisible so I have to make it less invisible. If there are days that I don't feel like I can lift something off a heavy shelf, I would not hesitate to say to my colleague, could you help me? But other people would and I feel like it's too bad that we can't because there's days that I could help someone lift something off a heavy shelf and I have.

That's correct, yes.

That's just the way it works.

I hope this is going to also help other folks that are listening to us to take the courage to be able to also face whatever invisible disability that they go through. Because I have talked to other folks in other segments as well. When you talk about privilege, we always have a specific topic that you go through. We never think about privilege in the sense of being able or capable to do something that's inside a circumstance as many, many folks are not in condition to do so. The idea that for the reason of fear of disclosing this, fear of not being accepted in a job, or not being able to have that support, like you said, you have phenomenal health care, this is the part that hurts the most when you think we need to open up more and more. From the point when we are talking about, and I hope I can bring this subject to our conversation later, mothers that needs the time to be with their children, the maternity leave, and also the whole process of raising a child or 1, 2 or 3 in terms of schools, everything that comes with it.

Because I don't just need the flexibility for my health, I need the flexibility for the health of my child.

Exactly.

Recently I needed it to support my husband, and sometimes that's what we need to do. My father-in-law has dementia and lives close by to us in our neighborhood and he's part of our support system.

There you go.

He's someone who we also have to care for. I think a huge part of what has always kept me for 15 years at HLS is that I have always been given the benefit of being able to balance my life, and when I needed to be in a place I needed to be, I had the ability to be there.

This is wonderful. I think it's fantastic to know this information in the aspect, going back to the idea of privilege for everyone listening too, that what matters in our lives? What really is what driving us in terms of growing our ambition, our development, what we expect too, and then see many other factors that you don't count because you don't need to. Then just when you face this, you are going to have a sense of what others. I think that's the important thing in terms of a community, when we know each other. Going back to what you said, this is not defining. Multiple sclerosis is not defining you. You are taking hold of this, taking control in the way that you are functioning, working, and doing everything that you can. I think this is brilliant for other people to have a sense of what it is as well. I'm so happy that you shared that, or I would say more grateful than anything else for sharing that with me and with us and people that are going through it. Thank you, Carey, for all the work that you do for the person that you are, that I know you for so long since our Facilities in Beckman Center time. Thank you for accepting to talk to us and to participate in this project. I hope everybody can see the amazing person that you are and the side of the work that you provide your Facilities as well.

Thank you, Edgar. Thank you for inviting me to be here.

For everybody out there, until our next time with our next guest, I'll see you then. Bye bye. [MUSIC]