

The Story Goes | Mike Bennett | ARC of San Antonio

MOLLY: Hey! It's Molly Cox with SA 2020, in our little podcast, called the Story Goes in collaboration with KLRN and we are in what is called the city view studio today... Which I don't know if we rolled out the city view studio just for *you* Mike but usually we are in a closet. [\(0:20\)](#)

MIKE: Exactly, well I like the view! I mean we are sitting here right on Broadway, I can see towards downtown. This is great—

MOLLY: I know it's beautiful—

MIKE: (overlapped with Molly) It's very nice—

MOLLY: I know, and so I'd—

MIKE: (interrupting) and the cameras are off, which is also very nice.

MOLLY: (laughing) I know, and it is still just podcasting!

MIKE: Exactly. [\(0:33\)](#)

MOLLY: So, um, just as a reminder, the Story Goes is an opportunity for us to speak more specifically about a full story of the people and the organizations who are quietly and sometimes loudly changing the way that San Antonio operates and we have been super focused on finding organizations that we maybe kind of know their mission..

MIKE: (agrees) mmhmm [\(0:54\)](#)

MOLLY: (continues) and maybe we don't necessarily know the full breadth of impact that they have--

MIKE: Exactly--

MOLLY: (continues) which I appreciate a lot. Mike Bennett is here, the Executive Director and CEO, president of all things, I am making up your title...

MIKE: (jokingly) That's fine, continue that's all, all that's good. [\(1:10\)](#)

MOLLY: The ARC of San Antonio—

MIKE: Correct!



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MOLLY: Um, and we are going to talk a little bit about the ARC of San Antonio, and before we do that though, it has been interesting to me the people we have had on, particularly the nonprofit sector and their trajectory to get to sort of where they are—

MIKE: Yes (1:27)

MOLLY: Um, we spoke with Nicole Amri who is over at SaySi, and she, um, started as an artist in SaySi and now is like (light chuckle) running part of SaySi. Um, we have spoken to people like Dawn Dixon over at Connect and Ability at Warm Springs who had sort of an interesting trajectory.. and uh Angela White over at Alpha Home who was in Corporate Sector America and is now running a nonprofit.. *You* on the other hand.. are like.. *original.. hard-core* non profit dude. (2:00)

MIKE: Indeed.

MOLLY: You have ALWAYS been in the nonprofit sector.

MIKE: That is correct.

MOLLY: And I met you when you were running the local chapter of the American Red Cross. (2:11)

MIKE: That's right, that's right—

MOLLY: And *you*, we were talking before we got here “on air...” that's my air quotes... um and you said you were with the Red Cross for (large emphasis) *37 years*.

MIKE: 37 years.

MOLLY: (jokingly) which is like uh I mean you look good for 112!

MIKE: (cheery) Why thank you! (2:25)

MOLLY: You're welcome, um and 37 years is basically how old I am, (jokingly) minus 10 because I'm like 25ish.

MIKE: (joking along) Precisely.

MOLLY: You, what you said was, (talking quickly) you graduated college on a Friday and you started work on a Monday?!



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MIKE: I did

MOLLY: (still talking quickly) and you *always* knew you were going to go into nonprofits? (2:42)

MIKE: No--

MOLLY: Okay..

MIKE: But I was always prepared for it because as in many cases with what I'd like to consider myself a successful man--

MOLLY: uh-huh

MIKE: there was a woman behind it—

MOLLY: okay..

MIKE: It was my mother--

MOLLY: Okay, got it! (2:53)

MIKE: And when I was 12, she walked into my room, and it was the summer, and she said (lightens tone of voice) “you can volunteer for the Red Cross, so you’re going to” and I said okay, I thought volunteering was voluntary, and she said (Mike and Molly laughing) “Not in *this* house” (3:07)

MOLLY: You were voluntold, voluntold!—

MIKE: Yes, I was voluntold

MOLLY: (overlapping) that’s right

MIKE: SO, I started as a youth volunteer when I was 13—

MOLLY: Okay...

MIKE: so, by the time I got out of college, I had all that experience of volunteering for all of those years, (changes tone) in different assignments, with the Red Cross. Now, the plan was not to do that for a *paid* career, the plan was to save lives as a physician. (3:26)



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MOLLY: oh, okay!

MIKE: But at that time, that basically bonged out my freshman year, when I darn near close didn't make it out of my freshman year (Molly laughing sympathetically), and my advisor said you're not gonna make it to med school with *these grades*, so why don't you have an alternative path, so I developed one

MOLLY: (Molly still laughing, harder now) Cause physician sounds nice, but it's hard!

MIKE: Yes, and he was very nice but he just said, (jokingly serious) this isn't going to work. (Molly laughs) (3:43)

MOLLY: You're not a doctor, so—

MIKE: (overlapping) I went in another direction, thousands of people are alive today cause I didn't make it past freshman year. (Molly laughs hard) But at any rate, so then still I wanted to stay in something medical, and the Red Cross was the largest national provider of blood products at the time, okay?

MOLLY: okay

MIKE: So, I went into the Red Cross' blood services side, (stumbling over) of, of, of that operation when I came out of college. I was in that for about 16 years and I transitioned to what folks *here* in San Antonio would recognize as a local Red Cross chapter. (4:13)

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: (quickly) disaster services, the armed forces, health and safety, CPR, First Aid, blah blah blah Blah..

MOLLY: Okay (4:18)

MIKE: And I spent the rest of my career with the Red Cross doing that kind of work, okay?

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: But at year 37, an opportunity came to change to another organization, Daughter's at Charity Services—

MOLLY: Yeah, okay



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MIKE: which is primarily a South Side agency, here in town, uh—

MOLLY: Yes! [\(4:35\)](#)

MIKE: and one of the great things about their operations was it had a medical, dental clinic for financially indigent folk, but it also had an early childhood education program, and that really got me excited, because you are talking to agencies all the time about how do we fix things, how do we improve things in San Antonio—

MOLLY: That's right [\(4:53\)](#)

MIKE: You start by getting to folks when they're young and giving them better opportunities and then you don't develop problems down the road.

MOLLY: Absolutely!

MIKE: Education... is a BIG. DEAL.

MOLLY: That's right. [\(5:01\)](#)

MIKE: That was a great piece of Daughter's of Charity Services, but then, another opportunity came along...

MOLLY: Okay...

MIKE: To join the ARC of San Antonio and so that is how I wound up in the studio with you looking at Broadway!

MOLLY: That's right, because I wouldn't have called you otherwise—

MIKE: That's right

MOLLY: ONLY with the ARC of San Antonio [\(5:14\)](#)

MIKE: That's right.

MOLLY: You, um, I am intrigued by the fact, one, were your parents volunteers?

MIKE: Uh my mother, (clears throat) excuse me, my mother was the volunteer. My dad had a job that traveled a lot, so he would volunteer on weekends, but *she* was the one who volunteered on weekdays because at that point in time, she didn't work routinely...



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MOLLY: okay, okay

MIKE: and that is what sort of set the tone (5:37)

MOLLY: Yeah, I think it's really, um, I don't know if we talk enough about it in our own families right—

MIKE: Yes, yes

MOLLY: Um, parents really do have the opportunity to instill very *early on*—

MIKE: (finishing Molly's sentence) an enormous impact—

MOLLY: yeah

MIKE: And I am no student of how parenting has changed over time—

MOLLY: (overlapping) Sure (5:53)

MIKE: But I simply know I was raised in a household where certain things, um, weren't up for discussion.

MOLLY: Okay.

MIKE: Volunteering, was considered to be important. But more importantly, laying on the couch all summer was NOT considered to be important. (Molly laughs) So it was like, you can do something with your time, and I am going to offer you an opportunity to do it, and this community is shot through of people, however they got those messages in their lives, do these kind of things everyday. They do it at the ARC of San Antonio or they do it on our boards, or other boards, or whatever—

MOLLY: Yeah, I know—(6:28)

MIKE: This is, of all the places we've lived, and we have lived in now 7 different cities, this probably has the best volunteer vibe if you will

MOLLY: San Antonio does?

MIKE: (proudly) San Antonio, of any city I've lived in



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MOLLY: I mean, I feel like we can use that for something—

MIKE: Absolutely (6:43)

MOLLY: Like a t-shirt or something—

MIKE: (overlapping) I think we could use it for a lot of things

MOLLY: And it would say “Mike Bennett lived in 7 places and this is the one---

Mike: Whatever we do, this is a great city for non profit collaboration (6:53)

MOLLY: (excited) I agree wholeheartedly. It’s funny we did an impact study, I know we are sort of.. I know we are going off on a tangent.. but we did an impact study with the organizations, nonprofit organizations, (talking quickly) that partner with SA2020, it’s about 126 organizations, (slows down) at the time we did this study, and there was over A MILLION HOURS served by volunteers to the organizations---

MIKE: Yes

MOLLY: Which if you do the math on its 24 dollars and some change an hour for some volunteer, it’s like BILLIONS of dollars returned on our community. And we always, when we are tracking volunteer hours, typically, we find that our numbers are lower than um other states, and yet, it’s because we don’t track church service or hey, I’m helping my friend down the street---

MIKE: That’s right (7:37)

MOLLY: You have to be able to track it—

MIKE: Yes

MOLLY: So, I am intrigued by the fact that you’ve seen volunteer service as a major thing.

MIKE: Yes, no no because I’ve been in places where (slows down) you saw it, but you didn’t see it to the extent that you see it here and with the close collaboration. This is the most collaborative community that I have lived in, in 7 communities. No disrespect to the others (7:57)

MOLLY: No, No, we won’t name them—



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MIKE: No, we won't

MOLLY: (jokingly) Um, I mean we could

MIKE: (jokingly) Starting with... but we won't

MOLLY: (overlapped, laughing) we could just list the names. (back to normal) But I mean, we see the same things with SA2020, which is why, to be fair, when KLRN came to us and said "hey let's do this podcast together" For us, it was like OH, this is a perfect opportunity to show EXACTLY how San Antonio is collaborating in ways that are pretty interesting. Let's talk about the ARC of San Antonio specifically. Um, um, what is it? (8:21)

MIKE: Sure, as with many agencies---

MOLLY: (interrupting, laughing) I'm a great interviewer!

MIKE: Yes, you are!

MOLLY: I ask, *real good*, questions.

MIKE: Yes, you do. Well you're like Terry Gros, (mimics) tell me about your organization and off you go. (Molly laughing)

MOLLY: That's exactly right! (8:34)

MIKE: (sirens start in background) Basically, it's really simple. ARC of San Antonio—

MOLLY: Wait, we are going to wait—

MIKE: We are going to let them go by?

MOLLY: WAIT, is this a funeral procession?

MIKE: It is, it is

MOLLY: (jokingly) Of course it is. Oh okay—

MIKE: They're just clearing the intersection—

MOLLY: Oh okay they're just clearing, so we're good. NOW, tell us what—



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MIKE: (interrupting) Part of everyday life

MOLLY: (light laughter) I know, it's the City View studio [\(8:51\)](#)

MIKE: Um, the ARC of San Antonio like many good organizations was started by parents.

MOLLY: Okay.

MIKE: And it was started by parents in 1954 because the resources for special needs individuals, which is terminology some folks use, intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals which some folks use, um were few and far between—

MOLLY: Okay..

MIKE: So the parents came together and said we have got to find a way to find more resources because this is heavy lifting, okay?

MOLLY: Okay [\(9:18\)](#)

MIKE: So over the years, the ARC has been a leader in this community and across the country by getting into different lines of service for the families and the actual individuals who have special needs. And so, here in San Antonio at one point, we ran group homes. But it became clear that wasn't our best mission, that was for others to run, so that moved to other agencies. Um, and we did children's afterschool programming for a while, but there are many other organizations better suited, so we let that go at some point. So where we are focused now is in two *big* areas. We run, what is known as, a day-habilitation program for adults. We take folks who are 18 to whatever age they are, we have a 79 year old participant in our program, and we provide socialization, we provide exercise, we provide, um, various and (inaudible) enrichment, both in a congregate setting if you will within our building. And then, bringing folks out into the community. On any given day in fact, here Andy and I were talking about the fact that the double decker cruise, uh tourist, buses, we need to get our participants on one of those one day—

MOLLY: Absolutely— [\(10:25\)](#)

MIKE: (continuing) giving them a different view than they might not have had of San Antonio

MOLLY: (softly) Okay

MIKE: Point is, this helps *280 folks* on a weekly basis improve their lives, come into contact with other folks—



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MOLLY: Sure—

MIKE: (continuing) who may have similar, OR not so similar disabilities, and get along and make their lives better. That's a great part of the program.

MOLLY: I want to talk a little bit about that, that kind of reminds me of our senior centers in town, or our community centers in town—

MIKE: Yes, yes (10:53)

MOLLY: (continuing) getting these people out of their homes, something that um very specifically came up in the conversation with Dawnn Dixon with connect and ability was this idea that when physical disability happens, you don't have the opportunity to get out of your house, you become very isolated—

MIKE: Correct.

MOLLY: I would imagine, forgive me for making that comparison, in an intellectual disability, um there is also a space around isolation I would assume (11:15)

MIKE: Absolutely, and you can very much be isolated at home if your family doesn't have the resources to get you out. Let's say, those parents need to work—

MOLLY: Sure

MIKE: (continuing) What happens to you?

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: We like to talk about there are more resources for children with special needs, but when you get to approximately between 18 and 22, and you leave the school system, that stuff stops okay?

MOLLY: Okay (11:42)

MIKE: (coughs) Excuse me, and what's more important, um adults are not paid the same as tension two in terms of those funding sources—

MOLLY: Sure—



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MIKE: (continuing) as the children were...

MOLLY: Okay..

MIKE: So if you don't have a plan, all of the sudden you may be on the sofa because no one has the... SO, we offer the possibility of a place to come—

MOLLY: Absolutely (12:02)

MIKE: (continuing) interact, learn new things, and uh learn new things about the community as well.

MOLLY: You said that there were two things that you're really focused on, did I—

MIKE: Yes, you did hear that

MOLLY: So, one is day-habilitation—

MIKE: It is, it is

MOLLY: Okay, so then the other?

MIKE: The other we call in a lot of words, Case Management, Community Outreach, and uh I like to use the term Navigation (12:25)

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: So, if you step back from the fact that an individual has a set of needs or disabilities that they're coping with, and they have a family, it is very difficult sometimes, for families to figure out how they get all these different needs met in a community, where unfortunately you can not go to a single place and have all things happen. There are things going on in this community where that will be easier, but it will never be all in one place.

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: SO, our case managers, our outreach workers, they work directly with families and say tell us about your situation, tell us what you think you need, and let us direct you to the resources that are available in the community. (13:05)

MOLLY: Okay



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MIKE: And that's why I call it navigating because it's real stormy water out there for some folks—

MOLLY: Sure

MIKE: (continuing) and it changes if parents who are listening to this think about how difficult it is to navigate a neurotypical child's development in which what you deal with at 5 is not what you deal with at 15 which is not what you deal with in college or whatever

MOLLY: Right. (13:25)

MIKE: It's even harder for these individuals because they need more particular pieces done, and if you have to coordinate them because they're not available all through the same sources.

MOLLY: Okay (13:36)

MIKE: We help plow folks way through that and help them get that done.

MOLLY: Do you, we were talking a little bit before we got on, you were talking most specifically about funding sources, um and the idea, to *me* I can't even imagine trying to navigate---

MIKE: Right, right

MOLLY: (continuing) And I'm talking *any of it*, right. Medical, educational, anything. Always anything there's never a one stop where can I go just to get the information I need, so I imagine that the navigation part that you're providing is both helpful, but also sort of relieve some stress—

MIKE: It's emotionally supportive, that's exactly right. (14:13)

MOLLY: Yeah.. what is the.. talk to me about funding in this space? Not just you, but generally, what are we looking at statewide, what are we looking at locally when we think about sort of something, I would think of as important as what you're doing, where does it come from?
(14:30)

MIKE: Well, it comes from a variety of sources as with most agencies that are in town, most are not single shot source in funding—

MOLLY: But why, where is the single shot source in funding



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MIKE: (Molly laughing) Well, that would be nice if we could all pour it into a bucket. In one of your recent podcasts you talked about infinite needs, finite (clears throat) resources.

MOLLY: (says synchronized) resources. I get that all the time. [\(14:53\)](#)

MIKE: That's for all of us. We are not saying in the special needs community we have a lock on that—

MOLLY: Sure

MIKE: Everybody's got that.

MOLLY: Of course. [\(14:59\)](#)

MIKE: But, our issue is this.. some money comes from the federal government and then is put out into various programs, but obviously the situation is how much money is allowed to flow out into the state can effect how much money is to be put out there. And then there is state money that is driven by the legislature, and I'll give you this, (slows down) Texas is at the bottom of the list on ranked states on per capita expenditures on special needs individuals. That's a very, now granted that's a very rough measure and I'm sure it involves education and all those other things. But I give you this perspective, I have lived in about 7 different states, when most people hear the states of West Virginia or Alabama mentioned, in regard to social services, support for diseases, a lot of different things, they tend to think of them as low on the totem poll, and in many cases they are, and I've lived in both, and I've seen that, but Texas is one the bottom of special needs, and Alabama and West Virginia are up in the 30s. [\(16:05\)](#)

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: (continuing) It's not fabulous, but it's a lot better than being 48th or 49th.

MOLLY: That's right

MIKE: So my point is to simply that we as a special needs community need to become more assertive with our legislatures to point that out and to say these are folks with real needs, and in most cases, they are needs that a family can not meet by themselves with their resources because they are so complex. [\(16:32\)](#)

MOLLY: Right

MIKE: They're medical issues, they're cognitive issues, they're behavioral issues, they go on and on and on and on. We can do better--



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MOLLY: Of course

MIKE: (Continuing) Than we are doing

MOLLY: And you have the added bonus, uh, as you have mentioned earlier because you are working with adult populations, not child populations, I assume that--

MIKE: (interrupts) for the day-habilitation

MOLLY: (continuing) I assume that that piece of the pie—

MIKE: (continuing) We work with a lot of children in case management and a ton of them are as a matter of fact. The day program gets all adults. (17:01)

MOLLY: Okay, so then my question to you then, as we start thinking about the ARC and the populations that you serve, not just at the Day-habilitations but in the Navigation component of it, I'm curious, I would assume that when we talk sort of, very generically about your work, it's like thank you for the work that you do, and we sort of, family well being and well done on health and fitness, but there is, I'm assuming an economic competitiveness component to the work that you do. Is there space around navigating where somebody potentially goes to school or the jobs that are available, right? Um, we consistently say in San Antonio, or at least, over the course of the last several months, in a municipal election, which I am so glad is over now, um the conversations that we were having as a community were very specific to like "we don't have jobs" which we know is UNTRUE. It is 100% untrue, we have *all the jobs*, we do not have the workforce to fill the jobs--

MIKE: (in unison) to fill the jobs. That's correct. (18:03)

MOLLY: So, I'm curious, is that a component of the work you do as well?

MIKE: Absolutely. It's unfortunately not a large component of what we at the ARC do, but it is a large component of the IDD and Special Needs community.

MOLLY: Okay.

MIKE: And I'll put it to you this way, um last year when Sean Kennedy was the chair of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, he started a program that Paul Williams is continuing this year, to try to encourage companies to be more open with their hiring practices and bring in folks with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There are many jobs within many organizations that can be done.. Yes, you may have to modify some things, and yes you may have, I assure



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that there may be some coaching involved and so forth. So while we don't train people at the ARC, we sort of helps folks prepare to the point where they can say, maybe I would like to do that. Then we can refer them to either state organizations or local nonprofits, like Unicorn Center is an example, who can help them make that jump. And we have had a few folks in our program who have literally made the jump on their own. But sometimes they need additional work. (19:05)

MOLLY: When you talk about, um, components of this when we say, as a community that we believe that everybody, no matter their zip code can have educational opportunity no matter, economic prosperity, and then we start to speak very specifically, and we touched on it a little bit, this idea of bringing somebody in, um, who has a disability, and the modifications that a company needs to make and immediately the nervousness of, "what do you mean modifications" and "what do I actually have to do" and "I don't think we can do that" which is counter to our values, as a community. And it is not difficult when we talk about modifications. (19:45)

MIKE: And it's not, it's not as difficult as some might see, um I think it's clear to anybody who has been around a while, that the average person may have some difficult, unless they have some background with a special needs individual, immediately relating to some of the things that they see or that they hear, and that is understandable. But it is very easily overcome, once you understand. More importantly in the employment setting, we've got employers here like Whataburger who go out of their way, to do this work. I've heard um one of the senior executives of Denny's focus on the fact that they would have a very difficult time running their stores if they didn't have a fairly consistent flow of folks with special needs who come and help them staff their stores. (20:32)

MOLLY: Yeah

MIKE: So yeah, you have to make a commitment to it. Yeah, it does take some work. The state will help you, employment agencies will help you, other agencies will help you, you have to look at them.

MOLLY: I just feel it is back to we could do better, right? Like we could all do better.

MIKE: (overlapped) We absolutely could do better. It's just going to take folks from moving from a variety of different points to get attention paid.

MOLLY: Um, I guess, let's talk a bit about your work in the community, I, the special needs, um, organizations, the organizations that help out our population with special needs are like, there is such an array of you, and it ranges from kids to adults and everything in between, and it's amazing, you're a very collaborative community—



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MIKE: Extremely collaborative (21:18)

MOLLY: And I would assume it is a continuum of care. Like “hey, we don’t do this but we know exactly who does” right? It’s like pass offs. I would assume that is also an incredible stress reliever for families if they know “hey this organization and this organization work well together.” Can you talk a little bit about the idea, I know we keep talking, bringing it back up again this infinite need, finite resources, but I feel like there’s a fantastic network of organizations who are working in this space and who work well together?

MIKE: Precisely. And I’ll give you an example of what I think I mentioned to you before we went on air, and that was the concept of how collaborative this community is.

MOLLY: Sure (21:59)

MIKE: Several years ago, the Kronkosky Foundation said when it came to the Autism spectrum, there was work that needed to be done in San Antonio, that needed to do just that, connect people to resources to help improve the state of our services. So they founded something called Autism Lifeline Links, don’t let the name throw you off if you’re listening to this, while the focus is on Autism, the agencies that participate under that collaborative banner, we serve everybody—

MOLLY: Okay.. (22:29)

MIKE: And particularly at the ARC we don’t focus on one particular thing like down syndrome or the Autism spectrum, we take folks with a very wide variety. But the thing about Autism Lifeline Links is they are deliberately trying to link us together, so they can: a. gather data for the kind of advocacy I talked about, and b. link us electronically so that if we need a family and they need to go to Any Baby Can, we can fire an electronic message with some data already attached—

MOLLY: Perfect!

MIKE: (continues) So they don’t have to do the leg work all over again. We can talk to Brighton Center, we can talk to Special Reach or Respite Care. You know a variety of other organizations quickly, and we can save the family some time. (23:13)

MOLLY: Okay—

MIKE: So that is a really important part of how we all work together to help those folks over those transitional bumps.



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MOLLY: There is something very, um, specific to me, I am mildly obsessed with the nonprofit sector (sarcastically) obviously, um, but there is also this component of the nonprofit sector being able to step into these spaces that have major gaps. Just with this conversation with you, we are having a funding gap obviously, um and resource gaps generally, there is a challenge between children with special needs and adults with special needs and a *gap* there as well. And the nonprofit sector steps in, in such a beautiful way, so we started this entire thing talking about volunteers and sort of getting involved that way and seeing how San Antonio has really stepped up to the plate, we like to end every podcast with sort of a call to action, and I feel like, maybe I'm wrong, so I'm gonna use my own naiveté to say it, I feel like sometimes when we say special needs it becomes uncomfortable like we aren't exactly sure, "what are we supposed to say," "how are we supposed to behave," "what are we supposed to do," and I'm curious if there is like a call to action for you that is more about visiting some of these organizations and seeing that it is not nearly as uncomfortable or racking as you think it is. [\(24:36\)](#)

MIKE: One of our participants in the day program has said, and I won't quote her exactly, (clears throat), but she has basically said the disabilities that she contends with don't change the fact that she's just like the rest of everybody else—

MOLLY: (overlapping, upbeat) Just a human, yeah

MIKE: (continuing) inside, she's a human with wants, needs, aspirations, and she simply has to cope with some things that most of us don't have to cope with. So, if I were to call this community to action, I would simply say, reach out to the folks with special needs, learn to understand what those needs are, and you are going to see that they are just like everybody. We are all people. We just need a little extra understanding, perhaps. And then, more importantly if you can and are willing, get involved! All the organizations I mentioned, and certainly at the ARC, we put volunteers to work everyday to be part of what we do. [\(25:28\)](#)

MOLLY: What would a typical volunteer day at the ARC look like?

MIKE: Uh, it could be a variety of things. It could be helping with some of those social activities I mentioned. We have monthly dances, annual talent shows. Uh, they can come help with me getting hit in the face with pie (Molly laughs) once a year.

MOLLY: (jokingly) So you're saying, a volunteer could come and throw a pie at you?

MIKE: OH YES, we can make that happen.

MOLLY: Alright, so it maybe that they want to help the ARC, it may be that they just want to throw a pie at you, whichever, you'll take it.



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MIKE: We can make that happen for radio hosts.

MOLLY: Wait, oh, wait! (joking) As a podcast person, I'm not in, I'm done, I can not do it. [\(26:01\)](#)

MIKE: Cannot do it?

MOLLY: I mean, I would take a pie in the face if it was necessary.

MIKE: But the point is, when I say volunteering, there is another piece of it, that is the employment piece for folks who are going into physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy—

MOLLY: Yeah

MIKE: (continues) I mean those folks in training need a place to practice.

MOLLY: That's exactly right.

MIKE: We are a place to practice.

MOLLY: You're like *welcome*.

MIKE: So we work with all of those schools: nursing schools and others, to bring those folks into our settings, so they bring a lot to what goes on in there. There are therapy dogs that come visit, so if you're a therapy dog volunteer, you might wind up at the ARC of San Antonio. [\(26:33\)](#)

MOLLY: Okay

MIKE: There aren't too many limitations, we are trying to help folks exceed their limitations, so we aren't going to set too many.

MOLLY: Right, I love that. Um, I love that a lot. Um, let's talk real quick about, um from a volunteer perspective we've got that place, if, if a parent is listening, if a family member of a person with special needs, they can call you on the phone and you can help them navigate.

MIKE: Yes! Oh, absolutely. We have in fact three different shops that do this case management or outreach to family kinds of work. But everyday in one of those shops, one person is the case manager of the day and calls the come in cold, gets directed to that individual that listens enough say okay good, this is what we need to do next. That may be to refer to someone in our shop or it may be to say you know what, that's an Any Baby Can thing. What you're asking



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about is right up their alley, so this is where you need to go and we will help you do that kind of thing.

MOLLY: Sure (27:31)

MIKE: But the ARC wants to be a place where everybody in this community comes for information and referral and hope in terms of we can deal with this, we just need some help.

MOLLY: This idea of not setting limitations I love so much. Mike, thank you for doing this.

MIKE: Well thank you for having me. I was a little bit frightened because I've been around you a lot in public spaces and normally you are a very rapid speaker. (Molly laughs) And I listen to podcasts on one and a half times speed, and this is going to be very hard to keep up with her, but you've made it comfortable.

MOLLY: Did I do it? Okay, good!

MIKE: No, you did good. And you have a coffee in your hand and you still did good.

MOLLY: I've been drinking coffee since like 7am today—

MIKE: There you go.

MOLLY: (continues) and it's the afternoon by this point. Yeah, I've appreciated you since I met you at Red Cross and I think it is admirable that you have made your life's work nonprofits.

MIKE: Well, it's been a fun life having those experiences. And in turn, we are proud to be a part of SA2020. That's something like Autism Lifeline Links. It's something in this community you don't see all over the country, you don't see it modeled. We are setting some real good tone for the rest of the country. (28:40)

MOLLY: I appreciate you saying that. (jokingly) Your check is in the mail.

MIKE: (jokes back) Good, good. Make it out to ARC of San Antonio, so people don't think the money is going to me.

MOLLY: It's only 20 bucks

MIKE: That's okay, we take 20 dollar checks, right Andy? (Molly laughs)



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MOLLY: This is our next episode of the Story Goes. Again, a collaborative podcast between KLRN and SA2020. Everything you've heard about today will be online at KLRN.org/thestorygoes. (quietly) And you know, don't set limitations. That's a good one.

MIKE: (upbeat) Amen.



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