



Jeb Bush

912 Food Farmacy

Savannah, GA

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Diana Dombrowski: All right. Today is December 22nd, 2020. I'm here with Jeb Bush for the Southern Foodways Alliance COVID-19 project. If you could, Mr. Bush, would you tell us when and where you were born?

Jeb Bush: I was born in Estill, South Carolina.

Diana Dombrowski: All right. And what did your parents do there?

Jeb Bush: My Dad was a farmer. So Mom was a stay-at-home mom. There were five of us, so she had her hands full with children.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, I can imagine. What was it like growing up there?

Jeb Bush: It was really cool. I credit growing up out in the middle of nowhere to having a creative mind now as an adult because I had to make up my own games and so forth. But I had all this land to run around and play on.

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And so it was lonely at times, but it was-- 'cause all my other friends would meet in town and ride their bicycles together, but for me it was-- I could make my own games and have my own fun.

Diana Dombrowski: That sounds good. That sounds good. And we are talking to you for this COVID-19 project at the recommendation of Wholesome Wave. What brought you to Georgia?

Jeb Bush: So I actually still live in Estill after moving-- I went to school at the University of South Carolina for undergrad and then moved to Washington D.C. for a few years, and then

lived here in Savannah for about 10, 15 years, and then moved back to Estill a few years ago to be closer to my parents.

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Diana Dombrowski: Gotcha.

Jeb Bush: Diana, it is about to restart.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, okay. That's fine. Let's take a pause here. I'll pause what we're doing. Okay. All right. So we're back to recording after a brief intermission. We were just talking about your time living in D.C., in Georgia, and now back to South Carolina. So we followed that trajectory, and I would love to know a little bit more about the work that you do, 'cause I know you're right on the border there, right?

Jeb Bush: Right.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

Jeb Bush: So it's about an hour commute from Estill every day.

Diana Dombrowski: Wow.

Jeb Bush: But it's not bad. It gives me a chance to-- like this morning-- a chance to gear up to be prepared for the day. And by the time I get home, I'm home, left work behind.

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So I've been in nonprofits my entire life. In college I was doing internships. Immediately post college I was working for nonprofits in D.C., worked for nonprofits here in Savannah. And then

got a little burned out and decided to start farming myself. And so I was actually one of the vendors of the Forsyth Farmers' Market for about two years before this position came open.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, wow!

Jeb Bush: And so, when the position came open, I was, like, oh, I mean, just my love of farming and all my experience in nonprofits, it just seemed like the perfect fit for me. And so I applied for the job and got it, and that was over three years ago.

Diana Dombrowski: Great. Wow.

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Yeah, I was looking at your website. It looks like you-all have a pretty big team.

Jeb Bush: Yeah. And it keeps growing, so. . .

Diana Dombrowski: Great!

Jeb Bush: We're going through a big period of growth right now with new programs and better staffing of old programs.

Diana Dombrowski: Great. Yeah. So when we think about COVID's impact on your organization, has it continued to be a time of growth for you-all as you handle this challenge or what has that been like?

Jeb Bush: So we launched 912 Food Farmacy, which is a produce prescription program. We got a \$455,000 grant from the USDA last year.

Diana Dombrowski: Wow!

Jeb Bush: Came in last year in the fall to launch a program starting in the spring. It was supposed to launch in March, but it got pushed back to May, but we still were able to launch a brand-new program in the middle of COVID.

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Diana Dombrowski: Wow!

Jeb Bush: So that was pretty impressive. There are only eight cities in the US that got that grant last year and we were one of them. And we were the only ones that actually moved forward during COVID.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, wow! I know that I've talked to a few people who work in farmers' markets and they've-- everything that came down, like, that March through May period, there was a lot of shifting, there was a lot of messages that changed really quickly. So as the executive director, how did you handle that, working between vendors and then also folks were coming to the market? What was that time like for you?

Jeb Bush: Oh, especially March, March was just crazy.

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And especially that second-- what was it-- the second week in March where everything just shut down all at once. The city told us on Tuesday of that week that we could not have the farmers' market in the park like we always do. And so our office is actually on a church campus that's got a good bit of land on it in Thunderbolt, which is a little suburb of Savannah. And so we were gonna host it out here, and then the town of Thunderbolt said on Friday at about three o'clock in the afternoon, no, you can't do that. And so we were supposed to host the market on Saturday

morning at nine. At about six o'clock, somebody finally was able to get ahold of the mayor and he gave us permission to come back to Forsyth Park for the next day. So we never missed a market.

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But that whole week we had planned on moving everybody to Thunderbolt, and then we had to rush everybody back to Forsyth Park. It was so confusing. And we had board members stationed here in Thunderbolt at the office to direct people back to the park. And everybody took it in stride. I will have to say, our customers understood that we were doing the best we could.

Diana Dombrowski: I mean, everything was changing, everything was different at that time. Yeah. And I know some folks were also disinfecting food, and we were wearing masks and we weren't even sure how this was spreading. So what did those first couple markets look like for you guys in terms of customers and that sort of thing?

Jeb Bush: So the first market was a little slow.

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Diana Dombrowski: Yeah.

Jeb Bush: I think everybody was confused as to-- everybody just, I think, wanted to hunker down, thought that if we just hunkered down for a week or so it would go away. And then people, I think, realized that farmers were in great need of support. All these restaurants shut down, and so that was half the income for most of our farmers. So the public started coming out in droves to the Saturday market, I think for several reasons. I think people wanted to support the

farmers, I think people were cooking more and so they needed more ingredients, and I think people felt safer shopping at an outdoor market than at a crowded grocery store.

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Diana Dombrowski: That makes a lot of sense. How were you able to support vendors during that time? Having been a farmer yourself, I can imagine that you have seen the entire process from that side.

Jeb Bush: So, yeah. And so we developed a program called the COVID-19 Food Fund. And the idea behind that was those who were food insecure were disproportionately affected by COVID, and so we needed to support them in unique ways. And so we actually have always sold produce into low-income, low-food-access neighborhoods, working with Wholesome Wave with the half-off program, or Georgia Fresh For Less.

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But this time we actually raised money to give away the food, and we raised about \$10,000. And we used that money to purchase food from local farmers to then distribute into neighborhoods where there just wasn't any produce--

Diana Dombrowski: Right.

Jeb Bush: --where people just didn't have any financial resources. You know, you think back, at first all these people lost their jobs, and it was taking unemployment forever to catch up. People needed SNAP benefits, but they had to wait a certain amount of time to apply for SNAP benefits because it looked like they still had income when they didn't. And so we were just trying to fill a void from there, but also support farmers as much as we possibly could.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah.

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It seems like you're in a unique position to understand exactly which neighborhoods might have the most need and what kind of jobs were most impacted, having been plugged in prior to Georgia Fresh For Less and Wholesome Wave. But there are all these nonprofits working together to try to understand where these areas of insecurity might be the most extreme. Would you say that y'all worked together to kind of figure that out, and how to do distribution or. . . I'm just curious about what that process really looked like.

Jeb Bush: So we really worked with some of our local fellow nonprofits and community centers.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

Jeb Bush: The community centers were really great supporters-- great partners because they knew exactly who didn't have food.

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Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: Because people kept coming to the community centers looking for any resource that they could get. And so we ended up doing a lot of our distributions directly to community centers, as well as to a couple of more direct-service nonprofits.

Diana Dombrowski: Gotcha. Okay. Okay. So we're talking about the timeline of all that in terms of the farmers' market itself. And how did your organization, like, your team, how did you-all respond to maybe working differently or working from home in different ways like that?

Jeb Bush: So we tried to work from home. We really did.

Diana Dombrowski: [Laughter] Okay.

Jeb Bush: We weren't the best at it, including myself. But I know that it's my responsibility to set an example, and I didn't do a great job.

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I couldn't work from home. I mean, I just could not-- I've always been really good about working from home, but after about three days of going stir crazy for not leaving the house. . . And then things started coming up where I needed to be in the office. We were short staffed, had just lost one of our farm truck drivers, and so we needed somebody to fill the void there. And so I ended up driving the farm truck some, which was a great experience then just because the farm truck was having such high sales. Everywhere we went, the farm truck was being super successful.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Could you tell me a little bit more about the farm truck? I know you mentioned that before.

Jeb Bush: So Farm Truck 912 started in 2015.

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It started off serving two low-income, low-food-access neighborhoods. And it purchases produce directly from farmers and takes it out into these low-income communities. And so we now serve over 10 communities with our farm truck on a weekly basis.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, wow! Wow.

Jeb Bush: Yeah. We did almost \$10,000 worth of SNAP sales on the farm truck this year in the middle of a pandemic.

Diana Dombrowski: Wow!

Jeb Bush: So really being able to reach people who-- and the beauty of the farm truck is it takes away the physical barriers such as lack of transportation to fresh food.

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But it also, because of our partnership with Wholesome Wave and the Fresh For Less program, it removes a lot of the financial barriers because we're not only accepting SNAP benefits, we're doing it at half off.

Diana Dombrowski: That's huge. Yeah. That's amazing. How do y'all coordinate doing that during this time? Is it any different?

Jeb Bush: Well, we really just kind of stuck to our-- well, a couple of our stops we had to cut just because of staffing and really wanted to focus in on stops that were doing-- that we could really support people the most. And so we condensed a little bit, but our sales expanded.

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And so, really, we were helping farmers. And our total sales for the year were over \$50,000, and last year we had only done \$38,000.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, wow!

Jeb Bush: So we had a huge increase in one year.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. That's enormous. Wow! I can only imagine, too, what it would be like-- you said that you're stepping into these different roles, including driving the farm truck yourself. What did that feel like for you to be doing that and to be in that role?

Jeb Bush: Yeah. I've always kind of been the fallback person.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: So, yeah, I was happy to do it and glad I could do it, but it was weird in a pandemic because there was no hugging.

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Normally you see people and you visit with them. It was very much helping people get their food and sending them on their way to their next stop, or then helping the next customer in line. And we have long lines. I never was scared. And, of course, at the beginning, COVID wasn't bad in Georgia and so we shut down quickly enough where it never got to be a big deal early on. Of course, it got to be a big deal later on, but while all this was going on, a lot of people were really, really scared. At that point in time, they were just telling us to wash our hands and keep hand sanitizer close by.

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So we had this big thing of sanitizer and after every transaction I was doing my hands and making sure my hands were clean and washing my hands as much as possible. It was kind of weird because that was the big thing at first was wash your hands.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: Before the wear a mask, it was wash your hands.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah, yeah. As the recommendations have changed, have people been pretty receptive to that and just going with the flow or what have you encountered?

Jeb Bush: Yeah. So our farm truck customers are very good about wearing their masks. The market customers, the regulars are really good about wearing a mask. We have had some people that just straight up refuse to wear one.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: And it's very frustrating because it affects the people who are wearing a mask.

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You know, we want to make sure that we're a safe environment for shopping so all of our vendors are wearing the mask and most of our customers are. And so we go around every once in a while with disposable masks and just walk through the market and hand out masks to people, being, like, please wear one.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm, yeah. What do you do in those situations when that's not what someone wants to do, or, like, a customer?

Jeb Bush: I don't fight it too hard. I should fight it more, just to be honest with you. It's very much a-- I give people the opportunity to correct their behavior, but if they don't, I don't want to cause a scene in the middle of the market, either.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm, yeah. You want everything to stay as calm as possible, and for them probably to leave as quickly as they can, yeah.

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I understand. It's hard because I know in Georgia it's not just maybe a mixed signal about the seriousness of everything coming from different guidance from government bodies, but also the

political environment's been so charged. And, yeah, I can imagine that that would be really difficult to navigate, keeping everyone--

Jeb Bush: Our biggest offenders are tourists.

Diana Dombrowski: Really?

Jeb Bush: Yeah. And we're right there in Forsyth Park. Forsyth Park is one of the biggest tourist attractions in Savannah. Everybody wants to walk through the park. And the tourists just will not wear a mask.

Diana Dombrowski: Wow.

Jeb Bush: So that's definitely frustrating there.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. That must be the last thing you want.

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So when we're thinking about the way that you-all responded, it sounds like you initially-- the main priority was to protect staff but also to get out there and serve in all the ways that you could, realizing the cascading kind of impact these shutdowns and mandates might have, as well as the pandemic itself, on public health. So you had the farm truck going and you initiated this 912 Produce--

Jeb Bush: Food Farmacy.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Could you tell me a little bit more about that, circle back maybe a little bit?

Jeb Bush: Yes. The 912 Food Farmacy is a produce prescription program.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

Jeb Bush: And we partner with-- this year we partnered with three clinics to-- and pretty much what it is is the doctors help us enroll people, and by enrolling them they're writing a "prescription" for fresh food.

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And so we give out-- the participants check in with us once a month, we have some sort of education component, and then they get vouchers based on the size of their family for fresh produce. And so--

Diana Dombrowski: **Sounds very** innovative. Yeah.

Jeb Bush: And they can use those vouchers either on Farm Truck 912, which is always parked outside the clinic whenever we are having our education session, or they can use it at the Saturday farmers' market.

Diana Dombrowski: Great. And in doing that, have you seen that program grow. or what's it been like as far as participation goes?

Jeb Bush: Well, it wasn't as big as we had hoped for it to be this year.

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One of our clinical partners is the Chatham County Health Department. And so they were very busy with doing COVID testing and that was really where their focus went. So their enrollments weren't that high. The other clinic that didn't do well was Memorial Children's Clinic, and that was because they just shut down the children's clinic completely for a couple of months during that main recruitment time.

Diana Dombrowski: Wow.

Jeb Bush: And so hopefully this year we'll be able to get everything back and rolling again.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Have you heard any response from people who are participating and what it's been like for them?

Jeb Bush: Yeah. So we did paper surveys at the end, as well as a focus group-- two different focus groups.

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And all the participants really loved it. I mean, we got all positive reviews. One of the biggest themes that came out of this was that, because they had the economic opportunity to try new things, they were more likely to try new things, was the interesting twist that we had not expected. We had expected people just to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables. But people were curious about different fruits and vegetables that maybe they hadn't tried before.

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And they wanted to give it a try because they had these vouchers that they could spend on and not feel like they were losing their own funds if it didn't work out well.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Yeah. That's really nice. I'm sure that's going to be really helpful when everything lifts again and you develop even more regular customers. Is that kind of what you're thinking, as well? Well, at least for regular numbers of people coming in. Yeah, 'cause one of the things I saw, too, when it comes to this increase in farmers' markets usage across the state is the online ordering, too, that folks have been doing. I see on your website there's a whole list of vendors who are participating in that.

Jeb Bush: Um-hm.

Diana Dombrowski: What kind of shift have you seen in people getting online?

Jeb Bush: So it's been interesting because-- and they all did it themselves, too.

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We had some resources out there and were going to try to help be the conglomerate, but the farmers figured it all out on their own, made the partnerships on their own, and figured out distribution. We allowed our office to be a pickup site, tried to support them in whatever way we could, but they all partnered together to create farm bags that have been very successful for their businesses, that have helped them reach new customers, and has really been beneficial for the smaller farms, 'cause it seems like the smaller farms are kind of the ones leading this.

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And they're working with some of the bigger farms to help kind of **plush** up their menu a little bit. But one of our farmers has a twice-weekly farmers' market out at their urban farm here in Savannah, and they have a twice-weekly farmers' market at their farm.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, wow!

Jeb Bush: It's just them, but they have products from other farms as well. And then, we have-- like, Billy's Botanicals has done a ton of online farm bags. And the farm bag has goods from several different farmers in it.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, okay.

Jeb Bush: And so it's really been awesome to watch how they have handled the situation.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah.

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That sounds so creative. Those couple things that you mentioned, including the farm bags, are really unique, I think, maybe to that market that you're in right now. That's something I haven't heard before. And that sounds, too, like y'all are doing such innovative things, like having the farm truck not only go on its regular route, but also be present outside of educational events and getting the produce prescriptions together. Where does that creative energy come from? Where do y'all look for ideas? Or what is it like to work in that team? That sounds really exciting.

Jeb Bush: So we all come in-- yeah, really, it's a community effort.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: It really does. One of the first things I learned about whenever I started in this job was produce prescription programs.

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And I fell in love with the idea.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

Jeb Bush: And I've been wanting to do those since I started. And so I had it all dreamed out in my head exactly how it would look. It did not look the way that I dreamed it out because of COVID. Yeah. Each one of our team members comes with such a great background. Almost everybody has some type of background in food work or in food justice movement that we're able to look at what other organizations are doing and glean from them the best ideas and best practices.

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Diana Dombrowski: That sounds really valuable, yeah, and makes a lot of sense. 'Cause it seems like y'all have a really great, strong team, really intelligent. And what you're doing, at least on the website, seems like connecting all these different resources in one place for people, be it the vendors or resources when it comes to COVID. So it makes sense that that's kind of the way people are thinking and working, is also drawing from the resources outside where they've been working in the past or things that they've seen be successful. Yeah. I'm curious, too, just reflecting on your work as the executive director and your motivation for doing this work, how that's influenced by what we talked about a little earlier, which was your work in public history and the documentation that you did with people who, I think you said, worked the land that your family owned.

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But coming to see how people are impacted by the food system as it's set up, and different forms of access or discrimination in their ability to access and participate. I'm just curious how that motivates your mission for your work?

Jeb Bush: I think, as executive director, one of the biggest things that I have to do to be successful is to form relationships. And I think that was something that came out of that history degree was learning how to tell a story, maybe not as succinctly as my professors wanted it told.

Diana Dombrowski: [Laughter]

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Jeb Bush: But, yeah, being able to share what we're doing with people who-- and get other people involved and other people passionate about the work that we're doing. And so I think there is a correlation between the history degree and being the executive director of a food organization.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah, that makes sense. And I can tell that your plan and orientation is really to help people of highest need, not just to keep vendors afloat and make sure that they can participate, and it makes sense for them to participate, but with this same effort, also make sure that you're serving people who really need the product.

Jeb Bush: It used to hang on my wall, and I don't know where it was; it was a poster that somebody made for me, and it said, "How does this support farmers? How does this improve food access?"

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Diana Dombrowski: Hmm.

Jeb Bush: And I always try to run anything that we're doing by those two questions.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Yeah. Are those your words or was that what someone just distilled as your essence? [Laughter]

Jeb Bush: No. It's how I-- I cannot for the life of me-- this is horrible. I should not admit it. I can't tell you our mission statement.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay. [Laughter]

Jeb Bush: Our mission statement is flowery and pretty and it has all this terminology in it. And when you boil it down, our mission is to support farmers and improve food access in our

community. That is our flowered mission statement broken down into two parts. And those two parts don't have to be mutually exclusive.

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And they should actually, honestly, at all times, be partnered with one another.

Diana Dombrowski: That makes a lot of sense. It definitely makes a lot of sense. I'm just impressed by the way that you're really able to put it in action with a sense of such urgency. In this moment where people are just trying to keep things together, y'all are reaching out in lots of ways, and I think that that's really special.

Jeb Bush: Thank you.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Yeah. I have a couple questions about personally what it's been like to live and work in this COVID time for you, for yourself. It seems like your job has stayed secure, even though your responsibilities might've shifted and changed with the need at the time.

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Have you been well in terms of your health and taking care of your folks? What has that been like?

Jeb Bush: So, yeah. My husband's a nurse.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, wow!

Jeb Bush: Yeah. So he is very much in the frontline.

Diana Dombrowski: Yes.

Jeb Bush: He does employee health at one of the local hospitals, and so we have been very lucky that both of us have stayed healthy this entire period.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: And really, we've had to shift our plans, vacation plans and stuff like that, but we've still been able to take some time away and try to keep living.

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Diana Dombrowski: Yeah.

Jeb Bush: And not get too bogged down in the-- I think COVID could get very overwhelming very quickly, and I think being able to take a step back and take a step away every so often is really important.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Yeah. I can see where maybe having learned that already working in public health can really serve you during this time where it's, again, so urgent. Yeah. It could feel so urgent that that sounds really important. Are you still farming yourself?

Jeb Bush: I have a little garden and that's it.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

Jeb Bush: And I still have some chickens.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay. Great. [Laughter]

Jeb Bush: In fact, my last rooster died this past weekend.

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Diana Dombrowski: Oh, I'm sorry.

Jeb Bush: **So I** feel bad about it, 'cause it's the first time since we moved back to the farm that I don't have a rooster right now.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, sorry. But I can imagine, though, what a happy place it is to come back from being so highly engaged at work and then to just rest and be out there with the birds.

Jeb Bush: Yeah.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah.

Jeb Bush: It's fun, 'cause the birds are right there by the driveway, and so you see them as soon as you get home from work.

Diana Dombrowski: Aw!

Jeb Bush: And then, the goats have broken out of their pen. I need to do some massive work to their pasture. And so the goats are currently free ranging.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, no! [Laughter] That's [inaudible 0:37:57.1].

Jeb Bush: Yeah. It's a little menagerie of animals around.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah.

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That's really nice. That's really nice. What do y'all see as your vision for maybe the next three to six months and how y'all are planning to respond to COVID, or maybe just keep chugging along the way that you have been?

Jeb Bush: Personally or professionally?

Diana Dombrowski: Maybe both. [Laughter]

Jeb Bush: I do think just kind of doing what-- I think for both, doing what we're doing.

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: I am optimistic that this vaccine-- I think **Dave's** already been vaccinated, my husband. And so I think that that's going to open up some opportunities to hopefully end the virus or at least tame it down to where we can go back to somewhat of a normal life.

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Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: And I think being able to just take care of ourselves and, like I said, still just get away. And it might not be the big trips that we had planned, but still just finding little ways to get away and celebrate. Workwise, I think, really, I just want everybody to stay healthy. I think that's probably my biggest concern right now. I have pulled back personally from any direct programming where I'm working with another one of our staff members so that, in case one of us was to get sick, the other one would still be able to continue the program.

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Diana Dombrowski: Hmm.

Jeb Bush: So I haven't been working the market on Saturdays or anything like that for the past few weeks, ever since the numbers went back up so high. I just kind of took a-- taking steps back to make sure that if somebody gets sick, I can step in, or if I was to get sick that somebody else was there.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. That makes sense. When you talk about direct programming, that's the farmers' market, like you mentioned.

Jeb Bush: Right.

Diana Dombrowski: And **then** the farm truck. Are there other types of--

Jeb Bush: And the Farmacy.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay. Okay. Are you all still holding education sessions or anything like that?

Jeb Bush: So right now, the Farmacy goes in six-month cohorts.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

Jeb Bush: So it ended in October.

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Diana Dombrowski: Gotcha.

Jeb Bush: So that will start back up in March.

Diana Dombrowski: Great, great. Okay. All right. I hope that goes really well. Yeah.

Jeb Bush: But everything else is running-- and we're taking a few weeks off right now for holidays.

Diana Dombrowski: Oh, good, good.

Jeb Bush: Yeah.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. That's really nice. Good. I'm working for an organic certifier now, and we're also taking time off. It's really crucial for everyone, especially folks who have kids that they need to take care of in terms of homeschooling as the districts start shutting down or

reopening on their own schedule. Have y'all dealt with that with your employees navigating childcare?

Jeb Bush: Yeah. So only one of us has children.

Diana Dombrowski: Okay.

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Jeb Bush: And we made it very clear to her that her family comes first, and so she does work a very flexible schedule because she does have to go drop her kids off at school and pick them up in the afternoon and so forth. And so just trying to be as accommodating as possible for that.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah, I can tell. I can tell how people-centered your purpose is and how necessary that would be at a time like this. Yeah, yeah. Honestly, I know that that flexibility has been really important for my coworkers, too, because things can change really quickly with kids melting down [laughter] or maybe just needing a ride to school. So, yeah, yeah, flexibility is key.

0:43:00.8

And speaking of farmers, too, I am so impressed by the resilience that they employ all the time, not just COVID time. But you've got to be resilient, roll with the punches, look for the silver lining, and expect obstacles, honestly. So I wonder, too, have you spoken with vendors at the market and do you know what their mood or their mindset is looking to the future, the next three to six months?

Jeb Bush: I think everybody's got a sense of optimism. I think everybody is proud that they survived 2020.

Diana Dombrowski: [Laughter] Yeah.

Jeb Bush: Yeah. I think really that is something to be proud of, that we got through a very difficult year--

Diana Dombrowski: Um-hm.

Jeb Bush: --and their business is still standing.

0:44:00.5

So I think a lot of people just have optimism moving into 2021 on what their business is going to be like, at least from the conversations that I've had. And I think everybody is really-- we're actually going to have the market shut down for two weeks, which is the first time in a long time we've closed the market. And it's just because of the way that the holidays fell this year with Christmas and New Years both falling on Fridays, didn't think that the farmers would want to be up on Saturday morning the day after Christmas. And so everybody just wants a little bit of a break right now, and then, I think, refocus and reenergize themselves for 2021.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. That makes sense, that makes sense.

0:45:00.6

Those are my questions, having gone through your background and the main initiatives the market is putting forth, your motivation and experience. Is there anything that you think you'd like to have on record about your work during this time right now?

Jeb Bush: My goodness. I think we've gone over everything. Did we hit all the stuff that we talked about two weeks ago?

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. We had three things. We had the market itself, the farmers' fund--

Jeb Bush: Um-hm.

Diana Dombrowski: --and the truck, yeah.

Jeb Bush: Okay.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Yeah. Let's see. We talked about your home, your team, whether or not working from home really worked. [Laughter]

0:45:57.0

I think those are the main topics I was interested in, 'cause I was just most excited to talk to you because I can tell what a resource hub the market is for everybody who's participating in it in a really thoughtful way, you know, reading the bios of your team and all of their experience. I did that to prepare for this, and I was so just impressed by the talents and interests it looks like everyone has in supporting these initiatives that not just keep the market afloat but help Georgians who are in need. Yeah. I think that that-- y'all have really built something special, so thanks for telling me a little bit about it.

Jeb Bush: And I think one thing that-- we talked about local partnerships, but the statewide partnerships, Wholesome Wave and Georgia Organics, have been so important, and this is sustaining us.

0:47:01.8

Both of these organizations provided grant funding throughout the year to support our programs during COVID, and it was vital. Those funds were sometimes payroll on a tight year. But I'm just very thankful for those partnerships that we have.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. And they are as strong as they are because of relationship building that you put in place prior, I'm sure. Yeah.

Jeb Bush: Yeah.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Thank you for sharing. Thank you for letting me know. I hope that when we follow up in a couple months, be it six months or maybe longer, it's going to be able to be in person.

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So I'd love to come down and see the market and get to meet with you one on one, and fingers crossed we're able to do that.

Jeb Bush: Sounds great!

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Thank you for your time.

Jeb Bush: Thank you for all you're doing.

Diana Dombrowski: Yeah. Thank you. I think this is going to be a really awesome collection of really hardworking, thoughtful, creative people talking about their responses, and it's invaluable. Thank you for your time. I know we've worked a while to get it to work tech-wise, and it's so worth it. It really is. Thank you.

Jeb Bush: Thanks. Well, happy holidays to you!

Diana Dombrowski: You, too. The plan now is to just shut the recorder down and then we'll get it transcribed, we'll send you the audio.

0:48:58.5

And my plan is to keep connected, letting you know how the project's evolving, who we've interviewed, the themes we're looking at, so we're staying in touch, and you know how your interview is contributing to the project as a whole. So stay tuned.

Jeb Bush: Very cool. How exciting!

Diana Dombrowski: All right. Thank you. I'm excited, too. I really appreciate your time.

Thanks again.

Jeb Bush: Have a good day.

Diana Dombrowski: You, too. Bye-bye.

[End]