

Say What? | Youth and World Conference | Mollie Linkhart-Pansing

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Graceland University, Community of Chris, World Conference, youth delegate, Conference Kids, addiction, recovery, youth programs

SPEAKERS

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam, Mollie Linkhart-Pansing, Kassie Ripsam

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 00:27

Hello and welcome to Say What, a Project Zion Podcast series where we, Mary Anne and Kassie, we're your hosts, and we are here today with Mollie Pansing. Am I my pronouncing it right? Yep. Cool. And we're going to be getting to know Miss Molly here. Tell us a little bit about yourself. What do you do?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 00:48

What do I do? Well, I am currently a LPC in the state of Kansas, which means I'm a licensed professional counselor. I just graduated with my master's degree in counseling in this past December of 2023 and I'm working at a private practice currently in Overland Park, kind of seeing general population type people.

Kassie Ripsam 01:09

Do you have any, like, sort of hobbies?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 01:11

Yeah, I have a lot of hobbies, especially over the years. Since I was a kid, I love to do puzzles. I really like to exercise. I like going on walks. I've been doing yoga since I was like 16, kind of just as time permits. Throughout my life, I love to cook. I've been cooking since I was really young, so that's something I definitely do as well. Cook and bake, and I also, my, between my husband and I, we have three cats, so I really love my cats. I really enjoy just spending time with them, playing with them, hanging out. My oldest cat, Jack, is quite needy. He's a Big Mama's boy, so he, like, needs to have a certain amount of time, just like with me, per day, to be okay with life. So that's kind of something I have to work into every day.

Kassie Ripsam 01:56

That happens to my Mom, The cats follow them everywhere.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 01:56

Do your cats have, like, fall you into the bathroom?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 02:03

Yes, definitely.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 02:06

So we have some really fun questions that we asked our last interviewee, like, first, would you survive a zombie apocalypse?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 02:19

I think so. I at least think I have a pretty solid chance. I'm really resourceful. I box sometimes. I guess that's another one my hobbies, like heavy bag boxing. So, I think I could hold up in a fight at least, [okay]. And I think between my husband and I, we also are really into like, growing things. So, I think we could have a garden, at least sustain ourselves. So, I think given those sets of skills, I think I'd at least have a shot. I may not make it long term, but I think I'd make at least for a while.

Kassie Ripsam 02:48

Second, I apologize to things I bump into. Do you ever talk to inanimate objects?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 02:55

Yes, absolutely. And I have, I think, for my entire life.

Kassie Ripsam 03:02

Third, what part of a driver's test do you think you would fail, or at least perform poorly in?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 03:10

I appreciated this question. It's a little moral, because I actually did get first driving test, and I think because I was very nervous and it, I honestly, I picked a bad time. There was a lot of traffic, and I switched lanes. I was a little bit too close to a school bus, so she dinged me for that. And then I actually, I think I waited too long for a pedestrian to cross the street, and so she dinged me for that as well. So I had to come back and retake it.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:38

Oh, wow. So last, last fun question, so, what is the weirdest dream you've ever had?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 03:47

I also like this question because I have a very active dream world, and I have since I was a child. So, one of my favorite dreams was, I'm really fond of badminton. I don't get to play very frequently anymore, but I took it when I was, like, in college, in high school, and I really liked badminton, so I had this dream that this, like professional badminton league, like, approached me, and they were like, 'We want you to play for us in our next big tournament.' And I was like, 'Heck, yeah, I'm on board.' And so cut to the tournament, and apparently you had to wear, like, a costume in this tournament. So, I was a donut in this badminton, and my playing name was not my regular name, my like player's name was sweet cheek, just one cheek. [Wow], I remember having a really hard time playing badminton in my costume.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 04:40

Yes, I think I would too. Should imagine if you had to play in one of those, like inflatable sumo wrestler costumes. Right? That'd be very serious experience.

Kassie Ripsam 04:53

So, on a more serious note, you stated in your email that you graduated from Graceland University. We have heard that their house program for each residence hall helps them feel like they are part of a family. Tell us about your experience at Graceland with their house program and community and inclusive principles.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 05:14

Absolutely. I would definitely agree with that. I would say each house I found everyone to be pretty inclusive and really welcoming. They made it really easy to get involved in, just like house activities. I felt like just being on the house was like a really great way to meet people. And I don't know, all the women on my halls were always really friendly and really, like interactive and, yeah, it was a really great experience. I really enjoyed the house system and living on the hall. It was a really strong sense of community.

Kassie Ripsam 05:51

So you said in the email that you completed the Community of Christ Leadership Program. We know nothing about this. What was the CCLP?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 06:05

I was unsure if maybe, by your question, if maybe CCLP doesn't exist anymore. I don't know. No, it does not. Okay. So, it was the Community of Christ Leadership Program. It was kind of, I remember, it was kind of something that you were kind of sponsored for through your local congregation. They gave you, like, a small amount of like grant money per semester, I believe. But with the CCLP program, there were kind of different requirements, so I had to take a certain amount of religion classes and pass them. We also had weekly meetings with, we had, like, different sectors in CCLP, I can't remember all them. I remember like the peace and justice one, but that was the only one I could remember. But we all kind of had, like a different focus, and we'd have weekly meetings. And then I think later on, in my last two years at CCLP, because I was getting older, they let me be like a leader or coordinator of the meetings, and that helped serve like a requirement. So that's something I did in the last two years. I would, I would lead and coordinate as well.

Kassie Ripsam 07:12

So how has that affected you?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 07:15

I was gonna say we also had retreats that we had to go to. How's that affected me? I got to meet a lot of cool people through CCLP. I really enjoyed the social aspect. The retreats that we went on were really, really beneficial. At least they were for me, because they would like take us, I don't remember where they took us, so I think maybe it was just a congregation in Lamoni, but they we, like, got off

Graceland campus until you were just with other CCLP people, and it just opened up kind of a new avenue for me to make more meaningful connections. And yeah, I think we also got to learn a lot about different issues through each other too. I think because we were all pretty aware people, we would also talk a lot about different like presenting issues, which I also thought was very beneficial. I think that's always productive conversation.

Kassie Ripsam 08:06

So, what are some tips you might have for anyone wanting to go to Graceland?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 08:13

I would say definitely get involved with your house, like we just talked about. Is a great way to just get to know people, get to know different programs that are offered on campus, just to kind of get to know what you like, what you don't like. Get to kind of find your tribe. And I would say, get involved also, like at school activities. Graceland offers so many fun things that you can kind of pick and choose that you want to go to. And there's always people going on the house, which is really fun. Like any activity that you might want to go to, there's always going to be a group of people on your house that are going to go. So it makes it really easy to just join in. They'd usually like, kind of organize a time and place that we would meet. Usually, we'd meet at the end of the hall, like a certain time, even to go to dinner. We would do that like every night, which was such an awesome sense of community that you always had people to have a meal with. Attend art shows. I really enjoyed the art shows that they offered on campus. And, form meaningful relationships. I think that was the biggest thing that came out of the house system, is I formed really strong bonds with the women that well, since I was with on the women's house, but also on the men's house, but for meaningful relationships, and I would also say, apply yourself. You're never going to regret applying yourself in school. I was actually just talking to my step daughter's grandmother about that today, about just how meaningful it will be later in life that you applied yourself in your classes. And there's usually a lot of resources that are offered on the hall too. I think we all like, would trade resources, like studying resources for classes amongst one another, which was also super helpful. And usually the house would have like, a whole kind of storage bin of like, different studying resources that different students have left behind for one another. So it was, it was an awesome experience.

Kassie Ripsam 10:07

So you stated in your bio that you have just celebrated three years of living alcohol free. Congratulations.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 10:14

Thank you.

Kassie Ripsam 10:15

Um, would you be okay sharing, sharing that story with us?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 10:20

Yeah, absolutely, I might get a little emotional, but that's, it's okay with [it's okay] I cry about everything. I'm an equal opportunity emotional crier. So, gosh, my relationship with alcohol was kind of, I don't know, weird for many, many years, I would say not healthy. We'll say not healthy for a long time, probably through my 20s. But it really got really bad during COVID, which it did for a lot of people. A lot of people started struggling with substance abuse once they had to be under lockdown. Looking back now, I can see that my relationship with alcohol got to where it was because I was, well, I preface, people abuse substances for a lot of different reasons. For me, I realized that it was me trying to manage some different mental health issues I was having with like anxiety and depression. I was also trying to manage a lot of trauma and different uncomfortable things that I think that I needed to work through that I was having a hard time processing. I'm also a really sensitive and highly emotional person, and so sometimes living in the day-to-day world can be a little bit much for me. And s,o I think alcohol was a way for me to kind of like dampen that down. So, when I, alcohol was I don't know, I was getting kind of out of control, like I said during COVID, and I was having a really hard time being honest with myself about how to get help. And I actually didn't quit until I met my husband. I was online dating, and I went on a date with this wonderful man, and he actually turned out to be a recovered alcohol abuser, and that kind of became a really big part of our relationship, and I, and I really wanted to give up alcohol, and I felt like through him, I was able to get the support I needed to finally be honest about where I was, and also to finally give it up. And so I actually stopped drinking, I think, within a couple days of us meeting, and that was kind of where my sobriety took off. I haven't relapsed since that day, which was October 20, 2021. Yeah. Did you ask me just to tell my story? I can't remember the whole question. [Yeah,] Okay.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 12:37

Really good for you.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 12:40

Yes, it's, it's been a very intense journey, I will say, recovering from substance abuse is one of the most powerful experiences I've ever had my entire life. Once I was able to step away from alcohol, I, like, had to have a whole new relationship with myself, with my body, like my body was recalibrating, like my GI system was recalibrating. I found out that I, like, couldn't drink caffeine anymore for a while. It made my anxiety go absolutely bananas. So, I didn't drink caffeine for probably about a year, because I just could not tolerate it at all. I would just get so anxious

Kassie Ripsam 13:16

I would die. I need my coffee.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 13:21

Let's see. Oh, and I was really, really emotional, all those emotions that I talked about that I was managing with alcohol. Well, my approach is a therapist anyways. When we don't process our emotions, it all just gets stuck in our nervous system, and it's all going to just catch up with us. So once I was able to step away from alcohol, I had like, a flood of emotions that I was feeling for probably several months. I was very emotional. I would cry just like all the time. Something I remember, like, I'd like walk by the card section and see a nice card, and I'd like cry. It was just a lot of different emotions. But once I was able to get through that, things started to balance out a lot more. And again, like you just

start to peel back all these different layers, I still feel like I'm learning so much about myself, even though it's been three years, it's a very amazing process

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 14:13

you've said a couple times now that you work for counseling community, you said in your bio, yeah. What is your job? Like there?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 14:20

My job, like there, I am part of a group private practice. So private practice, I don't know if you guys know what that means. It's kind of more traditionally what you think of with therapy. You make an appointment with somebody, and you come in and sit and talk for about an hour or so. So that's what I do there. I work with general population, which I think I talked about before, which just means, like, I don't have a specific kind of problem, presenting problem that I work with. I work with just about everything. And I have a lot of different age groups that I see. I have some I have a teenager that I see, a couple young adults and several older adults who are, you know, in their 30s, 40s. It's, I really enjoy. I get to manage my own schedule, which is really nice. And I get to do, I actually like this aspect. I do all my own billing and kind of handle all my own finances. I'm like my own I kind of work for myself a little bit. So it's, it's really good and the work I do there is really powerful. I It's really wonderful getting to build relationships like that with people. And it's really powerful the type of influence, too, that you have on people's lives. You know, being a therapist is a there's a lot of responsibility in this role. You're working with people's emotions. You have to be very aware of everything that you're saying and every just everything that you're doing, and it's, it's really crazy. Some of the people that come to talk to me, some of the people who come see me, they like, it's crazy the amount of space you can hold for people who don't say anything else to anybody, and they're like, you're the only person I tell these things to. Yeah, it's really powerful. And it's really powerful when people come to you and they're like, Oh, I've had this big thing all week, and I just, I want to talk to you about it, and it's to really, I don't know, it's just a really powerful thing to serve people in that way and be people's confidant and just special space where they can be themselves and seek counsel.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 16:20

So do you think your all life experiences with addiction helped you to relate with your clients at the clinic you work for?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 16:32

Oh, absolutely, most definitely, understanding addiction, I'm able to see how it affects your life or one's life in a lot of different ways. There's a lot of different aspects of addiction that touch your life, it changes your brain chemistry and like how you're even seeing the world and experiencing things. It plays a big part in your relationships, and can affect your relationships in a very significant way, very greatly. Can affect your finances as well, but it also helps me, like kind of suss out certain behaviors in my clients or sometimes their partners too. Because I have experienced addiction myself, I usually can offer a lot of perspective when I'm seeing some concerning behavior, either in my client or, like I said, sometimes when they're and a partner or a boyfriend, it's been a very helpful tool, and my clients have really appreciated to me being vulnerable with them, sometimes when that kind of stuff comes up in session.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 17:36

So do you have any thoughts to share with our listeners who may be struggling with addiction of any kind?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 17:41

Definitely do. First thing is get yourself some help. There are definitely people out there to help you and support you. You just gotta find them. Be honest with yourself, it's gonna take a lot of bravery to get through this, but also be curious about everything that you're experiencing with substance use. I think that's a big part, to be curious about how it's affecting you and how it's affecting your life. Be gentle and compassionate with yourself, and also know that not everyone is going to understand, and that's a really hard thing to face once you kind of like own your truth as an addict is, there's a lot of stigma out there, and a lot of people still, like, even some of my friends, don't really get that, like, I can't drink it all. Like, I've had a friend who's like, 'Oh, can't you have like, a glass of champagne at your wedding,' and no, I can't. She's like, 'Well, why not?' Because I cannot have a relationship with alcohol, and it's really awkward sometimes to have to, like, try to explain that to people, but do your best, try to have compassion for other people too. And I would also say the other big thing if you're suffering with addiction and you want to get better, is you have to replace the behavior with something. I think, a lot of people don't realize this, that you have to replace whatever the substance is. You have to replace it with another activity, or else it's going to be really, really hard for you to be successful. So whatever it is, find what works for you and start replacing it.

Kassie Ripsam 19:16

You told us in your email that you attended world conference as a youth, many times. Tell us more about your time being in service to the attendees through Youth Service Corps.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 19:28

That was a really unique experience. I think, Gosh, I think might have been like a freshman or sophomore in high school, and I was really shy, so it was kind of overwhelming being with all these youth, and they'd have you doing different jobs, like almost every day. They'd have you stationed somewhere else, so you were learning lots of new things. And like, as a high schooler, I didn't necessarily have a lot of job skills. This was all very new and kind of weird, but, but it was really fun, and I got to see, like, all different parts of the temple and the auditorium. Doing that one thing that was kind of hard, though. I think one time they scheduled me for like, a late shift, I ended at 10am and then they scheduled for me for an early shift the next morning. I had to be there, like six, I think, or 6:30. I was like, Are these people serious, that was, to do that turn around? But I did it, I showed up.

Kassie Ripsam 20:23

So, what was one thing you felt confused about then that you have a better understanding of now,

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 20:29

I think not so much confused, but something I learned was, it's not that serious. I think I was, I was really young, and I was really like feeling like I needed to show up in this really professional manner, and I kind of held a high standard for myself. I think going back, I would have been like, Mollie, just chill.

Like, it's you're just doing some awesome volunteer work. Just take a breath. Enjoy the people you're with. It's okay.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 20:58

So I'm sorry. I just thought this up, like when we were at Youth Service Core, last conference, one of the really, there were a couple, like, really boring jobs. So, what was your least favorite job in Youth Service Core?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 21:17

I think it was coach check. I think we all hated coat check.

Kassie Ripsam 21:22

Yeah, no one likes coat check.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 21:24

No one has coats. Who has coats?

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 21:29

So you're just sitting there playing cards.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 21:32

Yeah, this was like, before cell phones.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 21:33

So, they took our cell phones. They took our cell phones for coat check. Yeah.

Kassie Ripsam 21:44

Okay, so, we read the article you wrote in the Herald about the time you worked for Conference Kids, the program for elementary kids whose parents are delegates in the world at World Conference. It was a great article. How old were you when you worked for Conference Kids?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 22:00

I believe I was 18. I think I was a freshman at Graceland. So, yeah, I was still, it was still pretty new to Graceland, too. I remember being a little bit, I don't know if overwhelmed is the right word. It was, I don't know, there was a lot going on. I was still getting used to everything, adjusting,

Kassie Ripsam 22:21

Okay, um, in the first paragraph, you said there were 66 kids, 15 youth, 12 teachers, three clowns, the directors and a can of pink paint. Please tell us, what in the world did you do with the pink paint, and what were the buried treasures you all looked for?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 22:40

I, all I remember about the pink paint is, I think, like the first we all came in for like a day or two to prep for conference kids, because we had, there's a lot of organization. We need to do a lot of setting up.

And I, we had to paint something pink. I don't think I was necessarily involved with that project directly, but I was doing other things in the building, and something happened that the whole can of pink paint, like, fell on the floor. I think they had, like, just put in new carpets in there. And so the director was like, Oh, I really need to get this cleaned up and make it seem like this never happened. So that's, that's what I remember happened with the pink paint, and then the buried treasure. I think that was just about whatever the kids found that was interesting. It was usually a surprise to me. I think they would. I remember there being a lot of flowers that were identified as buried treasure, but just all kinds of various interesting things that we found in our adventures around the temple and the auditorium.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 23:44

So kind of to branch off of that, um, at the last World Conference, our youngest sister was one of the oldest in Conference Kids, and enjoyed playing with the younger kids there. One evening, she decided to pretend to be a cat owner and play with one of her friends. Pretty soon, every kid in Conference Kids was pretending to be cats with her, and like they started this kind of cat riot. What? What story or stories from Conference Kids or otherwise, do you have where all the kids you were working with went nuts.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 24:22

I don't know I have anything quite that entertaining. I remember them being nuts on our buried treasure adventures. We did a lot of running around like outside. I just remember them being very, very active. And I think I noted several of the kids really enjoyed being, like, carried around, and so I was doing a lot of that, which was a lot of activity. I was were very, very tired at the end. But one other kind of, like, fun thing. It wasn't like, nuts, but one kind of fun aspect. My group was I had two, I can't they were sisters, or if they were twins, but two young girls that were either from the Ukraine or Czechoslovakia, I can't recall, but they didn't speak very much English, but they were really sweet, and so we would just kind of mime different things to each other, or I'd have to leave them places. So we had to find alternative ways of communicating. But it went really great, and they were really wonderful. And I thought that was kind of a fun experience, getting to have that interaction, just kind of relying on our non-verbals and different kinds of things.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 25:32

Were you ever a youth delegate?

Kassie Ripsam 25:34

And what is that like exactly?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 25:38

Was a lot of long days sitting in meetings. Gosh, I can't remember when I did that. Let's see. I may have been like, a freshman or sophomore in high school when I did that. I know I took quite a bit of time off the school and had to, like, get a lot of assignments ahead of time. I remember working on homework quite a bit during our meetings to make sure I wasn't falling behind. Trying to remember. I know we voted on a lot of some big issues on in that year, and I believe one of them had something to do with homosexuality in the priesthood, and I actually that was a very important topic to me. I was very

supportive of that. So, I actually did come prepared to talk on that topic as a delegate that year. I believe they decided not to open up the floor for discussion on that topic, I think because it was just so highly controversial and really emotionally intense. But I really did enjoy being part of that part of our history. I can't remember what we ended up deciding. We may have passed it for another year, but I did enjoy being part of that. And it was a big topic we talked about in the mornings. I think we had like, there was some kind of, like, meeting I had to go to for youth in the morning before we had all of our meetings, and we would kind of talk about the topics for the day, about what was going to be like, posed on the floor, and just have discussion. And that was a very big discussion, too. And like our youth, whatever that was, our morning meeting, it was a very unique experience, and I'm glad I did it.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 27:19

Cool. So your bio said that you worked with youth on many occasions, Vacation Bible schools, homework club and even after you graduated from Graceland, you supported youth programs. What has been your favorite thing about working with youth?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 27:35

So one of my favorite things about working with kids is that children offer a really unique way of seeing the world, just because you're experiencing things for the first time, and your brain is developmentally in a place where, like your synapses is, your synapses are just like going crazy, and you have so many different connections in your brain. I'm a psychologist, so these are things I think about, and I love that about kids. I love hearing about the different ways that they see things. It's just so creative and fun, and it offers a whole new perspective on things that we can sometimes lose as we get older. But what I also love about children is there's usually this really unique presence that they bring, like being present with you, especially as we grow into adulthood, we're usually so busy with so many different things, and I think we can lose that sometimes. So working with kids also offers, like, a genuine type of connection that is really special, and something that you can't necessarily always find in adults. And I really, really love that about working with kids.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 28:38

So like, what were some of the jobs you did to support Community of Christ youth, Community of Christ youth programs.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 28:46

So after I graduated from Graceland University, as part of my CCLP requirements, I had to participate in certain ways. So I worked with the youth program in Longmont, Colorado for a while for that. But then, as you know, before that, I also did Conference Kids, and then we also talked about vacation bible school and homework club, all of those things I worked with youth.

Kassie Ripsam 29:14

Okay, um, last question, if you could have coffee or tea, whichever you prefer, with anyone alive or not, who would it be and what would you ask them?

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 29:29

So my person has stayed the same for a very long time, and it is Jane Goodall. Do you guys happen to know who that is? Yeah, the person that worked with chimpanzees, I think she is really freaking cool. And I took an Animal Behavior class when I was in high school, and got to, like, learn all about her, and I think she is an amazing person, and I just would love to hear all about her, her time out in the jungle, studying the chimpanzees, and all of her different experiences. And. Um, especially as a psychologist, I kind of consider myself like a behaviorist in general. I love watching like everything just exist, and watching it behave so that I really like relate to that with Jane Goodall, and I just think she's a fascinating person.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 30:16

I think that's it, um, we're grateful to have you today. Really just want to thank you for being here. Yeah,

Kassie Ripsam 30:25

It's been awesome.

Mollie Linkhart-Pansing 30:26

I appreciate it, guys, thanks for giving me this opportunity. This was really fun for me too.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 30:31

We want to thank you our listeners for joining us for this episode of Say What?, Be sure to join us again next time, and don't forget to put on your whole armor of God. And, be ready to risk something new. Go In Love.