



## Series 2: All about well-being

### Episode 3: Making a Difference: Real Benefits Stories from Four Field Associates

Maren Waggoner (00:00):

I'm looking forward to continuing the stories. I've got four fantastic associates here with me, and I'm gonna each let them introduce themselves and tell their own story. But first, just wanna share, um, how humbled I am in particular to lead this particular panel. Um, as you've seen, my husband and I actually took advantage of our centers of excellence as well. It was in the middle of the pandemic. He has an autoimmune disease and he was on dialysis and needed a transplant. I had no idea when I joined Walmart almost nine years ago that we would have this benefit, and in fact, kidneys were just added to it about a year before he needed it. And it was particularly important for us. It was in the height of the pandemic and, um, I actually, I wasn't able to have kids. And so giving the kidney was a way to give the life, right?

(00:43):

And that was a bit of our journey. He's doing great now. Still has the autoimmune disease. Hopefully there's 3D printing and kidneys later. Uh, but for now, for now, the kidney's functioning well and I couldn't be more grateful for the benefits that we have and had no idea, uh, what doors it would open. Um, but I wanna turn it over to the panel. They have fabulous stories of their own and have gone through a lot of, um, trials and tribulations and have also taken advantage. So, dash, I'm gonna start with you. Do you mind introducing yourself and sharing a bit of your story? And first of all, congratulations on being cancer free.

Tasheka Saunders (01:16):

Hi, everyone. My name is Tasheka Saunders. I work for, uh, Walmart, DC 6088 in Williamsburg, Virginia. Uh, at the age of, uh, 39, I was diagnosed, uh, with invasive ductal carcinoma. And, uh, a little while later, uh, that year, I had had a procedure, uh, to remove the mass. Uh, so I'm thinking like I'm all good to go. Um, I start, uh, in August of 2023 with Walmart and, uh, later found out that there was still more cancer there. And, uh, that is how I was able to take advantage of our Centers of Excellence program.

Maren Waggoner (01:57):

Yeah, amazing. Again, I'm so glad you're cancer free. Do you mind sharing a little bit with everyone here on, in the room and on the Zoom, what tips do you have? How did you learn about it, and what advice do you have for someone who might be going through this themselves or have a family member?

Tasheka Saunders (02:11):

Sure. So, uh, the Centers of Excellence actually reached out to me. They found out that I had the diagnosis. And I mean, it was, my experience was just amazing. I mean, from the time, uh, that they learned, they started planning my travel. Um, I get to the Mayo Clinic and I just knew that I was in the best hands. I had a, just a group, a team of doctors that were gonna take care of me during my MRI appointments. I mean, they held my hand, they rubbed my back, they gave me warm blankets after every procedure. Like, I just knew that they were gonna get me through the other side, um, of it. So, um, I would say to anyone, um, who, you know, has a serious medical condition, you have an opportunity to experience. I call it an experience, uh, the Centers of Excellence, it's a no brainer. You should just definitely go, uh, because you're gonna definitely get the best care.



Maren Waggoner (03:10):

Thank you so much for sharing your story. James, I'm gonna move over to you. Do you mind introducing yourself? Tell us a little bit about your kids and your story. Sure.

James Bright (03:18):

Uh, I'm James Bright. I'm the GM at 3010, uh, in Wellford, South Carolina. Um, I, this started really 10 years ago with my wife. Uh, my wife is a NICU nurse by trade, and this is her calling. Uh, she's, she's really good at what she does, uh, and she's always wanted to foster. Uh, and she, she wore me down after about seven or eight years, and we finally agreed <laugh>. Uh, so I agreed. Uh, and then we started the foster journey. And, uh, we were gonna be a foster family only. That was our, that was our goal. That was our mission. Uh, we were gonna give homes to babies and, um, Holden and Elle came in as our first placement, and, uh, they never left. Uh, so <laugh>, uh, you know, after about 12 or 13 months, um, of advocating for them and their health issues, that my wife diagnosed a lot of those, uh, and she really advocated for them. Uh, we felt God was just telling us that it was time to take them into our family forever. And, uh, we made the leap and, uh, couldn't be more happy. So, uh, uh, excited, uh, to have them be a part of our family. It's the hardest thing we've ever done. Uh, I'm way too old to have twins. Uh, I've got four adult children, so, uh, we, we started over again. But, uh, it's been the best and most rewarding thing we've ever done.

Maren Waggoner (04:27):

Is there anything you would share with the group here in terms of lessons learned? How did you learn about the adoption program and any tips there?

James Bright (04:34):

Yeah, so I, I'll be honest with you, I didn't know anything about the adoption benefits when we started the journey. That's not what we were doing this for. Uh, I was actually in Chicago working, uh, at ORD one, and, uh, my HRM Alanda, pulled me aside and said, Hey, I know your story. I know what you're going through. Um, you know, we have the adoption benefits. Have you read over those? Are you aware? And that's really what started my research. Uh, so I appreciate her, you know, pulling me aside and really pushing me. Uh, the adoption benefits are great. Um, and, you know, tip-wise for me, it's really just about doing your, your research. Uh, we have an adoption benefits program, and then there's tons of other benefits that, uh, adoption taps into. So do your research and make sure that, uh, you, you really do your research on, on the benefits across the board.

Maren Waggoner (05:17):

Awesome. Thank you, James. Interesting research. We've heard quite a bit, so I think that's, it's one of our takeaways for sure. Estrella, I'm gonna turn to you a little bit. You had heartbreaking story losing your mom. I'm so sorry for your loss. Thank you. And, um, wanna turn it to you to introduce yourself, share a bit of your story, and how financial wellbeing has been something that has impacted your family.

Estrella Garza (05:37):

Hi, I am Estrella Garza. I'm from San Antonio, Texas, Walmart 5245. And the benefits been a latte us. I had just turned 20 and my sister just turned 19, and my mom passed away with COVID when it first hit. My mom ended up being in the hospital for about a month, and she was just very scared for us. She didn't know who was gonna take care of us in the meantime. So her coworkers told us about, um, um, if she had anything, 'cause she didn't have a



will, you know, COVID hit unexpectedly, so we didn't know anything that she had. So they told us about to go to HR, and we went, and we found out that she had a 401 (k) and stock plan.

(06:26):

We were able to pay off our, not pay off, but we're almost done. We were able to pay off half of our land and acre and a half, and then we were able to pay onto a new mobile home. Uh, half of that got new cars and were able to pay for funeral expenses. And so it just, it just meant a lot, uh, with, with everything. And now that, um, I have a son, <laugh>, he's two years old. So now I have, um, that 401(k) going already. I had just came back five years later. I had left Walmart and I came back five years later and I started that plan right away. <laugh>, <laugh>, because you never know what's gonna happen. Um, you don't know if we're gonna have another pandemic, you don't know if we're gonna go on a shutdown or anything. And it's just good to have that and to support your family. Just even if you, you don't pass, it's just good to have that too. If you need a house, if you need to move or anything, it's good. It's good to have those, those plans.

Maren Waggoner (07:26):

Justin, I'm gonna turn over to you. Um, maybe introduce yourself a bit, your club manager. You've had to deal with a lot, working in a club, leading your team. Maybe share a little bit about your story as return to mental health.

Justin Garcia (07:38):

Uh, yes. So I was, you know, newly, newly promoted club manager. Uh, four months into, you know, my new role. Um, our club experienced a loss of a, a team member. And so it was definitely, you know, very difficult and emotional for everybody. And, you know, being a new club manager, I was just like, what do I do? Right? And so I reached out to, you know, Shayla, my market people partner at the time, you know, for advice. And I was like, you know, what can I do? Like, you know, the club is, you know, shaking, like, you know, and so she, um, recommended, you know, reaching out to, you know, Lyra. And so I reached out to Lyra and, you know, I, I asked them, you know, what are our options? They told me about, you know, an onsite grief counselor. And, um, you know, it happened like on a Wednesday. I called them Thursday, they were there Friday. That really, you know, showed the associates like, you know, Walmart cares, I care, we all care. And so just being able to provide them that kind of support really, you know, went a long way. You know, they made the process very simple. I really appreciated that, you know, just not knowing what to do.

Maren Waggoner (08:49):

I'm so sorry for the loss there. And thank you for showing up as a leader and the leader of the club needed you to, what advice do you have for leaders when, when things go wrong, when the team needs you, how did you show up and how did you cope with that?

Justin Garcia (09:03):

As a leader, you have to take care of yourself first. Like, you can't help someone else if you can't help yourself, right? So start with yourself and then lead with compassion and presence, right? Um, it's okay not to have the answers, um, but just showing up listening will definitely go a long way, you know, talk about it in morning meetings, you know, make sure they know what, what resources are available, right? So we start with day one in orientation. Um, just morning meetings, PM meetings, you know, whatever it is, just so they know that it's there, right? And then, um, just consistently check in with, with the folks, not just be there for the time of crisis, just get to know your folks, be there for them, and then just let them know that there's help available.



Maren Waggoner (09:46):

Yeah. I love that. Thank you. Thank you. There's some really, hopefully you picked up on it. Some really key things around listening about being present, awareness, do your research. Um, nobody can do that for you, right? That's, those are decisions you only can make. What's right for you, what's right for your family.