

**Long Life Learning Podcast - Yale School of Management Executive Education**  
**Episode 6—Jo Ann Jenkins**  
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**Kavitha Bindra (0:06)**

Hi, I'm Kavitha Bindra from the Yale School of Management. This is Long Life Learning, a podcast where we sit down with thought leaders and innovators to discuss living with inspiration and vitality. This season, we're having conversations about midlife and longevity and ways that inspire purpose and connection in the anticipation of our new program, the Experience Leaders Initiative, also known as ELI. For our sixth and final episode of the season, I'm thrilled to be speaking with Joanne Jenkins, CEO of AARP. Joanne has served as CEO for the past 10 years, including an additional two years as COO, and three years as president of a RP Foundation. After a distinguished career that has taken her from several departments and agencies in the US government to the Library of Congress to the AARP, she plans to step down as CEO of AARP at the end of November. She's known as a landmark innovator in the way Americans today view aging and has been instrumental in taking measures, combat, hunger, lower prescription drug costs, and keep social security in place. We're also overjoyed to have her as an invaluable member of ELI's Advisory Board. Joanne, welcome to the podcast.

**Jo Ann Jenkins (1:29)**

Well, thank you. I'm delighted to be here today.

**Kavitha Bindra (1:32)**

We're so delighted to have you. So we're wrapping up long Life Learning season one on a high note with you. A tradition we've developed on the podcast is to start with a question about the curiosity mindset, which is what we hope our first cohort of ELI Fellows will bring to the program. When do you feel that you have embraced the power of curiosity in your own life?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (1:56)**

Well, I guess I would think the one that comes to mind is when I actually transitioned from the legislative branch of government to AARP because I had worked some 20, 25 years in both the executive branch and then moved into the legislative branch, had the honor of working for two or three different presidents and a number of cabinet members before going to the Library of Congress. And I remember getting the call from AARP had actually served on the board of AARP services, which is their for-profit company. It was a chairman of the board, but terming off. And they had asked me to apply for the president of the foundation's job. And I remember having the conversation with my husband to say, "Hmm. I have enough years to retire, but I'm not old enough." I had just turned 50. And I was like, "I never thought I'd be working at AARP in an aging organization."

And so for me, it was a lot of curiosity and angst about could I make this transition from what my mother would've called my "good government safe job" to the nonprofit sector and doing work in the private sector to be able to do that. And growing up, I had always thought, oh, I could run anything. I could really, I felt good about my management skills and all of those kinds of things. It's always "You know, when I leave the federal government and retire, I think I'm going to run my own foundation." I always thought about that, but never envisioned that I would end up at a RP, the largest nonprofit in the country.

**Kavitha Bindra (3:23)**

Wow, what an amazing story. And we feel so fortunate to be speaking with you just before you step down from your remarkable 10 years of service as CEO of the AARP. You just alluded to this amazing, storied career, which took you from leadership roles in several government agencies to the COO of the Library of Congress to where you are today. It feels like the perfect time to ask. How do you tell the story of your professional journey and what are some of the turning points and milestones you would identify as defining moments in your career?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (4:00)**

Well, I think I would say first that I have been very fortunate to meet a number of people along my career journey who I have stayed in touch with over the course of my work life. I would also say that I chalk it up to I'm a very hard worker. I do what I say. I always tell the staff here, I want to be the truth talker. If you don't want the answer, don't ask me the question because I am more than likely to be very direct in sort of sharing what I see as the problems, as well as the opportunities. But one example I'd like to use is I actually came to Washington in 1979 to intern, and I actually ended up working for Elizabeth Dole and she had just come out of Duke Law School and was working in an area with what was voter outreach of how do we encourage more people to vote in the political process in the presidential local elections to be able to do that.

And so I spent the summer, if I dare say, making coffee and xeroxing, but around a number of high level people not even thinking that I would come back to Washington because I was attending college at Spring Hill College, which is a Jesuit school in Alabama. And you had to do an internship in some political space since I was a political science and finance major. And so I had come to Washington to intern. Little did I know some five years later, I would reconnect and interview for a position working for Secretary Dole when she was Secretary of Transportation. And then we have reconnected again since Senator Dole, her husband has passed away and she set up a foundation, the Dole Foundation that focuses on military families in caregiving. And so we have had the opportunity as AARP has stepped into that space in a big way about caregiving.

And also our work is more focused on the caregiver and how do we make sure that people look after the caregivers look after themselves so that they're better able to care for others. And so over the course of my 40 years of here in Washington, Senator Dole has been that mentor and sort of that sounding board and that words of encouragement. And in some cases, open doors that I wasn't able to open at that time.

But that experience when I was an intern really carried through that relationship of thinking. And so I always say to young people that I mentor here, "You never know who will end up being where". And that is particularly true in Washington because all Washington politics is local, and Democrats and Republicans will go in and out. I always say, "You shouldn't make unnecessary enemies," because you never know who you're going to have to work with. And that is so true here at AARP because we focus on our mission, not whether we're working with Democrats or Republicans, but what's best for people who are 50 and older in this country and what can we do and who can we work with to advance that social change agenda?

**Kavitha Bindra (7:02)**

Wow, that's such an amazing story about lifelong mentorship. I don't think I've heard a story like that before of someone who's been there at all those major sort of milestones and guideposts. So thank you so much for sharing that. Sharing. I love this description. I've seen a few times of the AARP as the world's largest nonprofit nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to social change. Why are these three

key terms, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and social change, the cornerstones of the AARP's identity and purpose?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (7:38)**

Well, let me first go back to: AARP is a social change organization with a membership, not a membership organization that does social change. And that's an important distinction because at the forefront of everything we do, it's about how do we change life for the better. For not just our members, but for all people who are 50 and older in this country. And that's a real defining moment for all of us inside AARP. That we're not simply here to drive our membership numbers—though we are the largest membership organization in the country at 38 million members—but our primary purpose is to bring about social change. And we do that through our staff, certainly through our 80,000 volunteers that we have all across the country. And we do it through our membership of pushing out content and educational information that empower our members to do the social change work that focuses on the wants and needs of people over 50.

And that voice, that nonprofit, nonpartisan voice is so important, particularly today, when we see a government so divided in politics that are separating us. Our voice, when we're advocating for something, it's about we are simply here to advance the wants and needs of people over 50. And we're going to work with whoever that takes in order for us to solve for social security, make sure there's safe, affordable access to healthcare, working on caregiving issues and all of those things that we come to work here at every day at AARP to pursue.

And so being nonpartisan, being a nonprofit, we're generating revenue, but all of that revenue gets poured right back into the mission work that we do at AARP. And so it's a critical, critical moment and time in our AARP'S 66-year history. I like to remind people that I'm the first female CEO of AARP since our founder, Dr. Ethel Percy Andres, who started AARP in the year I was born, in 1958. I feel like I have her on my shoulder sort of driving me around these issues that we care so deeply about. But being that honest, transparent broker for pushing the social change agenda, I think the combination of nonprofit, nonpartisan and being transparent is really key to how we work, not just at the national level, but in communities all across the country. And I think it speaks well to the quality of our brand.

**Kavitha Bindra (10:17)**

Thank you. If we could ask about a few of the major initiatives you've undertaken during your time as CEO. First: social security, which you've referenced. You've worked tirelessly to ensure that social security remains stable and dependably in place. Why was this at the top of your list of priorities?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (10:39)**

At the cornerstone of financial security for most older adults in this country is social security. And when social security was put in place many years ago, it was to be one part of several parts of financial security. And yet we know for many people in this country, more than 25%, social security is the only source of income they have in their older years. I like to remind folks on the hill that social security is an entitled-to because we've paid into the system over the course of a lifetime, not an entitlement. And so that's a key distinction that this is not a giveaway program. People have paid some 40 quarters to be able to qualify, and invested on a promise that the American government made, that if in fact you work and pay into the social security system, you're going to be entitled to a payout in your older years.

And so the work that we do at AARP is to make sure that social security is not there just today, but also for future generations to be able to do that. And we know that social security based on today's calculations is solvent through 2034. It has been my hope, though not realized, that we could bring

about solvency in the system for another generation, another 25 years of social security being there. But the work continues in negotiating with the White House and the House and Senate to keep social security front and center. To make sure that those funds that pay into the social security are invested properly and used for only that purpose, not solving some other financial crisis that Social Security didn't have anything to do. Because so many people depends on it. And I try to remind people that it's your own savings, and for many people, particularly folks my age, they probably have some type of pension or 401k plan that they've gotten through their source of employment. But for the next generation, the idea of pensions and 401ks don't automatically come. And so we need to devise a new kind of savings program that makes it easier.

Particularly, you know, when I grew up, you went to work for one place and you stayed there hopefully 15 or 20 years in terms of retirement. But in this new workforce, people are changing jobs every two to three years. And we need to make it easier for that savings vehicle, whether it be a 401k or some other kind of savings vehicle to be able to travel with the person as they continue to travel through their work journey. And so I think that's so important that social security is there, but it should not be the only source of income in your retirement years.

**Kavitha Bindra (13:28)**

Thank you, Jo Ann. Next I'd like to ask about hunger. I would love to hear what inspired you to launch the Drive to End Hunger Initiative and what you value most as its lasting impact.

**Jo Ann Jenkins (13:41)**

So in 2010, when I became the president of AARP Foundation, we really took a fresh look and decided that our mission should be focused on the low income vulnerable people all across this country. And we came up with four pillars of what we called: hunger, housing, income and isolation. Those were the main four areas that was driving this lack of security in their lives, and, along with the staff, we decided to take on the issue of hunger because in this country, nearly 10 million people over the age of 50 experience some type of hunger insecurity every day. And yet, if you talk to people on the streets, and in fact we did that, we actually sent out staff videotaping people on the streets surrounding the building to say, "How many people do you think go hungry in this country who are over at the age of 50?"

And people gave ridiculous numbers of 100,000, 200,000... And then when we said, "No, it's nearly 10 million people," people were really surprised and I think more than anything, wanting to do something to help. We had the opportunity to partner with NASCAR with Hendrick Motorsports. Sometimes I'm ashamed to say that I know more about NASCAR than I ever thought I would ever do, but we were fortunate to have Jeff Gordon, who was one of the most popular drivers in NASCAR, be our driver for what we call the "Drive to End Hunger" car. So we were the first nonprofit to be a sponsor in the NASCAR race circuit. And since then, many, many more nonprofits have gone into the space as a way of marketing and branding and bringing that message they were trying to do into the NASCAR community. But for us, it was about working with NASCAR and the drivers to raise awareness about the issue of hunger in this country and to get those fans engaged.

There are 38 NASCAR races a year. Every race has somewhere between 80-100,000 people every Sunday afternoon. And we started with a campaign of working with local food banks because our goal was to raise awareness and raise money and raise food, and then leave it in the community where the race was occurring. And so we teamed up with Feeding America and some other food partners at the local level to really raise that issue of food insecurity all across this country. And I think over the course of the five or six years we were engaged, we were able to serve more than 50 million meals across this country in those 38 different venues where NASCAR has their races. And it was an amazing experience. And also for

AARP, it was we can be both innovative and in ways that we're delivering our message, and at the same time bring in a new and different type of member to AARP who may not have envisioned that hunger was an issue that AARP was interested in and trying to tackle. And I think really still today is one of the highlights that we showcase here at AARP about being innovative and creative and trying something new and adjusting and changing when something doesn't go right. And in the end, by the time we finished our experience with NASCAR, you would go to one of the races and literally thousands of people would have AARP Drive to End Hunger shirts or hats on in the stands and bringing local donations or cans of food to deliver to local food banks all across the country.

**Kavitha Bindra (17:22)**

Wow. What an amazing impact. The final initiative I wanted to ask about is healthcare. You've had some significant wins when it comes to healthcare and the affordability of prescription drugs. Can you tell us about these initiatives?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (17:35)**

Well, this is something that is so important because the cost to prescription drugs continue to skyrocket. And yet we know that for many Americans, particularly those over the age of 50, that they're taking some three or four and sometimes many more prescription drugs every day. And so our challenge is not against the pharmaceutical industry for creating these drugs, but it's about at what point do the pharmaceutical companies recover their costs and come up with a reasonable pricing point? And for most other countries in the world, they allow price negotiations. But here in the US that does not occur under Medicare. And so a cure for hepatitis—which on average here in the US costs some \$80,000 a year—the same cure from the same manufacturer costs \$7,000-\$8,000 in Germany.

We have been very fortunate to work with the White House and work with the House and the Senate to get the prescription drugs bringing down the cost of prescription drugs this passed two years ago and the impact of that is in place now. And we're pleased that an additional 10 drugs will be coming into that competitive nature. But it's so important because people need these lifesaving drugs to stay healthy and to stay alive, quite frankly. And so we were very pleased to be able to help push that across the finish line. And we see so many people benefiting it every day, particularly capping the cost of insulin where in some cases people were paying \$200 and \$300 for the vial of insulin, and now that's been capped at a very minimal amount.

**Kavitha Bindra (19:18)**

Well, again, what an amazing impact, and thank you so much for allowing us to help you celebrate the impact that you've had during your tenure at AARP. We're also hoping to celebrate another pretty significant career shift in the next few months that brings with it a lot of changes on both a professional and level. And what language would you use to describe the stage of life you're moving into now?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (19:45)**

So I like to talk about this in terms of the fastest growing age group in this country is people over the age of 85, and the second is people over the age of 100. And if in fact, you know of a 10-year-old today, that 10-year-old has a more than 50% chance of living to be over the age of 100. And so if you think about a 100-year life course, then me at 66 has some 36 more years to live at least, assuming safe and affordable access to healthcare. We know that where you live makes a huge difference. We know that your eating and lifestyle makes a difference as well as your DNA and your health history with your family. So when I

think about it, it's like, "Oh, I've had in my mind two amazing careers in the government also with AARP, and then what will I do next?"

I promised myself that I'm going to take six months or so to sit back and reflect, but I can't imagine not doing something. And I think that's so important that people in their 60s and 70s and 80s are living very differently than our parents and our grandparents lived. They're healthy, they're vibrant. For us at AARP, one of the things that we saw with our employees who were retiring was that a large percentage of them came back about a year later saying, "Actually, I think I just needed a break." And so we actually devised a program for staff to come back, or take a sabbatical, or go on a five-year retirement plan so that they're working part-time, building up to retirement so that they can envision what it is they want to do next. And of course, we know that people who have meaning and purpose in life live some seven to eight years longer than people who don't.

And so understanding who you are and what your passion is and the experience and wisdom that you bring to solving whatever that is, is not only good for society, but it's good for your own health as well. I'm looking forward to this next chapter of my life. I can't say that I'm already going to do nothing because I serve on two corporate boards and also on a couple of other nonprofit boards. So I will still have a lot of activity going on even before I decide on what's the big thing I want to do.

**Kavitha Bindra (22:11)**

Great. And how would you characterize your personal relationship to the ideas of longevity and legacy making? I can only imagine these terms are on your mind as you're stepping down from your current role.

**Jo Ann Jenkins (22:24)**

Well, I think that when we build out programs and solutions, we're not necessarily thinking about legacy. But when I reflect back, I think one of the things that I'm most proud of, particularly at the work here at AARP beyond our mission-related work in advocacy and social change, is the way that we have developed and empowered leaders to be responsible for their own self achievement. We've worked closely with not only our executive leadership team, but the middle management and also with our other employees to make sure that they can see a path for what they want to do in their career and in their career journey. And I think that's so important. I often say that we've had that when you're looking to hire somebody in the nonprofit space and they haven't worked here at AARP, then you're not hiring the best.

And so now I'm eating my words because the few people who have left now are CEOs of other nonprofits. And so that makes me feel good that now I have other folks that I can go to when we need some support for some advocacy work to be able to do. But that would be something that is important to me as my legacy of: how do you build a team and develop leadership and remove the barriers for them to do their best work? And I think that's so important for all levels of an organization to make sure that whether you're in management or leadership positions, that you're constantly thinking about: what are the barriers that are in place for your colleagues that you could help remove that allows them to continue to flourish and be innovative and creative and have curiosity, so that they can continue to drive the mission of AARP?

**Kavitha Bindra (24:17)**

That's such a beautiful articulation of what you can do as a leader to really create the template for people to continue to be successful even when you're no longer at the organization. So thank you so much for sharing that. So on that same topic, I'd love to know where you feel you've been most



successful in challenging beliefs and mindsets around aging. How have you striven to open up new opportunities for Americans 50 and up to embrace this stage of life?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (24:49)**

Well, I guess I would step back and tell you the story about *Disrupt Aging*. Because when I came to AARP in my first couple weeks of being the CEO in 2014, and was preparing for my first major public speaking role at what we used to call the AARP Member Event, and we would have some 10-15,000 people there. I had my draft speech and it just was not my voice and it was not what I was experiencing at the time. It was written in a way that was more reflective of what I think AARP used to be, which was the protector. And not in a negative way, but helping people and in fact, telling people what they should be doing once they turned 65 or are in those older years. And for me, it was not reflective of how I was living my life, and I remember saying to Boe Workman, who has been my speech writer my entire tenure here at AARP, it was like, "This is not how I'm living and this is not how my friends are living." That we are vibrant and healthy and most of us still in the workforce. And we really need to change the perception of aging, not just in this country but around the world.

That 50 is not the new 30 and 60 is not the new 40. 50 is 50 and it looks good! And that we should embrace our age and that people should not be defined by a number. And I think that was the beginning of: how do we change this perception that older people are a burden to society and that we in fact bring wisdom and experience, and I dare say in this very competitive workforce that we're in now of trying to retain talent, that it's the older, more experienced worker that is reliable, that understands culture, that understands how you build teams. And that, coupled with a younger generation that understands technology and AI and how we can use those technologies. That when you bring those multiple generations together, you get a better product outcome and better solutions regardless of the area of expertise your business is in.

And so it was the beginning of the conversation about, "How do we change how we talk about aging? How do we change AARP?" That we're not telling people what their answer is, but that we're giving them an array of opportunities for them to decide how they want to live as they continue to age, and that we should focus on the living, not on the aging. I've seen significant change over the last 10 years in how we talk about aging now and about how advertisers present an array of ages in their advertising materials.

So we're not there yet, but we've come a long way from where we were 10 years ago when I was reading through that speech that I felt uncomfortable delivering because I wanted to highlight the positive aspects of aging while at the same time recognizing that not all of us were aging healthy. Where I live and where I work, there is a 11-year difference in life expectancy. And so our neighborhoods and our communities and where our doctors are and where our hospitals are make a significant difference in the quality of life. And not all of us have the same equal access to that. But in fact, the opportunity exists for us to—if we have safe, affordable access to quality healthcare—that we can in fact change the outcomes before us.

**Kavitha Bindra (28:50)**

Thank you so much, Jo Ann. It's interesting. I'm about to turn 47 in a week and I feel really reassured by your "50 is 50," because I don't feel like I'm 30. I feel excited about what my 50s hold for me, and I love that framing and that definition. So you referenced your landmark book, *Disrupt Aging: A Bold New Path to Living Your Best Life at Every Age*, and this was published in 2016. This premise that there's a disruption, almost a revolution in the way people are thinking and talking about longevity, is so in line with what we've heard from all of our other guests this season about why they've embraced bold career

and personal transitions in midlife. How much do you feel that public discourse, research, and real life opportunities have changed since the release of your book? And you've talked a little bit about your personal impact, but just curious how you've seen that landscape shift.

**Jo Ann Jenkins (29:51)**

So I think that we have made some progress in changing the perception of aging, but I don't think we're anywhere near what we would call success. We also know that in this very competitive age for fighting for talent that we're seeing more age discrimination than we've ever experienced. And so being able to identify that, and working with employers to raise that recognition, to make sure that age discrimination is also one of those factors that we look at in HR and other areas to make sure that there is no age discrimination. You know, one of the things that I always referenced back to when I came to AARP: we established a very vibrant intern program. And the interns would come here from college and they would be overwhelmed and excited about the work that we're doing, that we had the innovation lab and that we were doing product development, not things that they would normally attribute to an aging organization.

I remember in one of the closeout sessions, a young gentleman stood up and he said, "So we had a great experience here this summer, but all of your jobs require 15 years+ experience." And that was reflective of the way AARP has worked in the past. That we were hiring experienced workers to come into the workforce, and most of them had already had a career. And so we had to go back and think about career ladders here in AARP and whether or not we really needed 15 years of experience. And if in fact we were spending these dollars trying to invest in folks who were in college interning here, how might we create pathways for them to join AARP and also to embrace the issues that we care so deeply about here at AARP? We see this all the time with the folks who work in our innovation labs or the companies that come to us as part of our H-Tech collaborative.

There are people in their twenties and thirties who are trying to solve an issue for either a parent or grandparent. Whether it's about medication management or more flexibility and being able to walk, or looking at issues related to dementia and dementia care and the ability to use music to solve some of these anxiety issues... It was a "Aha" moment for us to say, "Actually, we have been pushing more towards an older employee versus trying to have a total pathway." I'm very pleased to say that on most days we have 200 or 300 interns who work here with us and that we've created those pathways, and at the same time still celebrating the fact that we have four to five generations here in our workforce at AARP.

**Kavitha Bindra (32:45)**

Wonderful. So we are of course, incredibly honored to have you as a member of the ELI Advisory Board. I'd love to hear a bit about what excites and energizes you about this partnership with Yale School of Management. What do you hope ELI Fellows will get out of the experience?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (33:03)**

So I'm very excited to be able to play a small role in this, and at the same time going through this myself as I make this transition from being the CEO here at AARP, and I think most CEOs who are getting ready to step down from 12 hour a day, probably seven day a week jobs, we need to have time to reflect and think about our values and what it is that we can do with the enormous amount of knowledge and wisdom and experience that we've developed over the course of a lifetime and just how we might want to spend the next 15 or 20 years giving back. I hope in a more meaningful way by driving social change, bringing that experience of how you run a business and how do you create teams and how do you work



across political spectrums and urban and rural and race and gender to bring about a more equitable society.

I think that's so important for us, particularly here in the US where we find ourselves in this moment of politics to be able to do that. So I'm looking forward to the first class to see the diversity of opinions that will be in that group and excited about being able to contribute while at the same time also being reflective of where I am in my career and my life. I always say to particularly young women when they ask, "Have you had to make sacrifices or can you have it all?" And I have always said, "You can have it all. It just can't be at the same time." That's what I found that we for everyone, but particularly for women, have to decide what's more important at that point in your career? Is it your family and raising your children? Is it your personal development? Is it broader family kind of issues that you need to address? And I do think we can have it all. I just think we have to manage expectations about what's important at that moment in life. As we get ready to transition from being a CEO to being a part of the first class, I'm looking forward to listening to other CEOs and drawing from their experiences and being a continuous learner to decide what I want to do next.

**Kavitha Bindra (35:23)**

Wonderful. And we really appreciate your guidance as we're developing and launching this program. Two of our most recent guests, Stephanie Dunson and Bonnie Wan, spoke about using writing as a source of self-discovery and revelation of purpose. I'd be curious to hear if writing has been an outlet for you as well. And if there are other methods of continual self-realization and transition, you would encourage ELI Fellows and their peers to embrace.

**Jo Ann Jenkins (35:54)**

So I can't say that I am a writer, but I am one who spends a considerable amount of time reflecting on experiences, and what could have been done better, and what worked well, and how can we replicate that in the workplace. And so now as I get ready to transition out, whether it's in writing something down or recording something, using technology to sort of step back and think about the journey and how important that has been. How important personal relationships are in our personal lives and in our professional lives. How do we think about serving people all across this country and all across the world who are less fortunate to us? To be able to create opportunities for them to uplift themselves while at the same time helping to drive a society and civil discourse that makes sense for all of us, particularly those of us here in the US. And so I'm contemplating what type of meditation I will work on contemplating. What am I going to take up? My husband thinks it's golf. Every time I go on a golf course, I think, "What could I be doing with these other five hours rather than being there?" And so I'm sort of in that stage that I'm willing to explore, but not necessarily definitive on what it is that I'm going to do.

**Kavitha Bindra (37:24)**

Yeah, so it's continual exploration through a variety of means. What are a few stories you can share with us about individuals whom you feel are thriving in their third act of life?

**Jo Ann Jenkins (37:37)**

Well, I have so many different people around me that are still continuing to give back. I happen to be part of an organization called The Links. And it's a predominantly African American organization, some 17,000 members here in the US in all 50 states. And part of it is about friendship and supporting each other, but it's also about giving back to the community. And I am continually amazed at the women in these organizations, most of which are in their 50s and 60s and 70s, about how they change younger

people's lives in focusing on STEM and STEM kind of projects that bring those career opportunities to life. About making sure that they have access to the arts and creativity that, perhaps if we weren't preparing our program or taking them to a program, wouldn't be part of the experience that they would have growing up. And so I really do believe that volunteering is a major source of strength.

I know here at AARP, as I said earlier, we have nearly 80,000 volunteers and we could not be successful if we didn't have those volunteers all across this country, many of which are much older, in their 70s and older, who go out and advocate and volunteer and teach people how to do different levels of work or advocating or languages or building things to be able to do that. And then, like I said, I have a lot of personal friends who are in their third act. I always tease Mark Freedman and say he has had more than three acts, and yet he can continue to create amazing programs, whether it's Experience Corps or some of the other programs like the Purpose Prize that we run here at AARP. It's a program, I think it's the only program in the country that celebrates and awards people for doing amazing things in their community over the age of 50. And so each year, we award seven \$50,000 prizes to people doing work in their post 50+ life.

I can't think of the woman's name at the moment, but we just awarded a prize to someone who works for the CIA. And she was trying to help identify a person who was trying to find their parent—they were adopted—and she came up with a program that used some of the technology that they use in the CIA when they're trying to find perhaps a criminal or someone. And she used that same technology using DNA to find this particular person's parents and then developed a program that, "Hey, this could be used at foster care facilities all across this country." And thinking, "How amazing is that, during the course of her normal work life, she was able to create a program that's going to be so helpful for many people who are in search of their parents and sort of going through all that." So we have an opportunity to celebrate so many people. This particular year, I think we had over 2000 applications, and unfortunately we could only award seven. But just amazing to see that people all across this country are giving back and experiencing their 50 plus years in creating some of the most amazing programs and services. And so that makes me very proud. And that particular program was originally conceived by Marc Freedman.

**Kavitha Bindra (41:18)**

Wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing that. And finally, we love to end by asking what books, videos, and other resources would you recommend listeners seek out next? Either to learn more about what we've discussed today or because they've nourished you and enriched your experience of life.

**Jo Ann Jenkins (41:38)**

Well, I'll give my colleague a plug here. The book I'm reading now is called *The Second Fifty*, and Dr. Deborah Whitman, who is the head of our policy and research arm just released this book. And it's about the 100-year life and what are you going to do from 50 to 100? And how do you think about those pathways of search and exploration to figure out what's next for the next 50? But even the idea that when social security was put in place, people were expected to retire between 55 and 60, 62, and then, for men, die by 68. And so the fact that people are living, at least most people—85 being the fastest growing group and the opportunity to live to be a hundred—you have 38 more years that you have to do with your life. And so this book that Deb has written explores some of that and I think comes at a very opportune time for all of us as we transition out of the workplace.

And then the other one I would say is Gary Shapiro's book called *Pivot or Die*. It's how do leaders thrive when every aspect of their lives are changing? And Gary is the CEO of the Consumer Technology Association, CES. And so it's a very interesting book that explores change. Obviously we went through a lot of change with Covid and those kind of issues. And so those are the two that I'm reading right now.

**Kavitha Bindra** (43:08)

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Joanne. We really appreciate your time, particularly at this I'm sure very busy stage as you're beginning to step down, but it's been such a pleasure talking with you today.

**Jo Ann Jenkins** (43:21)

Well, thank you. I've enjoyed the conversation. It's my last official podcast as a CEO. So I thank you for the opportunity and look forward to working with ELI.

**Kavitha Bindra** (43:30)

Thank you so much.