

CUTV Radio Interview with Carolyn Herbert – 06/20/2019

Jim Masters

Welcome to CUTV News Radio where our host Doug Llewellyn and Jim Masters talk to today's top thinkers from all around the world to bring you information inspiration and thought provoking ideas that you can put to use in your personal or professional life right now covering a broad range of topics we dig deep to discover what makes today's top thinkers tick. CUTV News Radio it's the show where ideas matter. And now here's today's host Jim Masters. We thank you very much for joining us everybody. We're live worldwide 10:00 a.m. Eastern here at the broadcast center.

It's Thursday, June 20, 2019. You're listening to CUTV News Radio Live and once again I'm your host Jim Masters.

We welcome everybody all around the world not just the United States and Canada but we reach a global audience an international audience here on CUTV News Radio Live or what would a broadcast series of in-depth interviews with experts and the folks who are doing what they can to their respective fields of endeavor and a wealth of passion to make our world a better place.

And we're welcoming a brand new guest here on CUTV News Radio Live. She resides in the beautiful state of Virginia. And her name is Carolyn Herbert and she is the creator of a company called Herbert's Wine Jelly which is a gourmet award winning specialty food product. I've been salivating as I've been doing my research and preparation for today's interview in just hearing about this this particular product. But what was really unique to learn in doing my homework and research for today's show. It's truly unique what the company is doing in terms of their hiring practice. Carolyn actually hires individuals who were formerly incarcerated or struggle with mental health issues. You know over the past few decades several decades incarceration rates have risen dramatically raising questions of how former felons can sort of reintegrate after they have been incarcerated. Formerly incarcerated people need jobs like everyone else to support themselves and their loved ones and pursue their dreams. Of course ex prisoners typically fare poorly in the labor market regardless of the circumstances surrounding their incarceration. Hiring a performer felon is seen as an unnecessary risk. Well CAROLYN HERBERT creator of Herbert's Wine Jelly realized this and she said also in addition that a family member with mental health issues and it was next to impossible for this person to obtain or retain any job. He does have a felony conviction which made it doubly hard. Now she had retired from 40 years herself as a special education school administrator and she felt that there was something that could be offered that was really needed. And with her family member in mind Carolyn and her husband took their wine jelly idea and decided to start their business. As their popularity grew they were able to expand to a more formal company and decided Herbert's Wine Jelly would be for people who may not otherwise find employment again. This is a pay it forward type of situation that they're doing helping others who are downtrodden and others who might not get the support from the community at large and the wonderful thing that they're doing. She says "We're not just jelly", they are whatever helps provide fulfilling employment to their employees. Each person decides when they come in what their role should be from where they are. They come up with what they want to do to be a part of the company. One young man came up with Herbert's Herb Dip to go along with the jelly. Another came up with peanut butter products. Oh my God I'm gonna have to get one of these catalogs. Peanut butter and herb dip and jelly I'm done sold. But again the purpose of it really is not just at being a business. They're giving back to humanity to community to our society. They take, a listen to this, Carolyn and her husband take nothing from the company not 40 percent 50 60 even 80 percent 100 percent of all the profits go back to the employees. Yes I know you're saying why. We'll find out how they do that. When she joins me in just a second. One hundred percent of all the profits go back to the employees. It's really amazing work that they're doing. It's a beautiful work that they're doing. Let me welcome her to our shows. We can talk about how they do it

and the passion and the things that have inspired her to do this kind of work. Right now we welcome CAROLYN HERBERT to CUTV News Radio live for this exclusive interview right now. Carolyn in beautiful Virginia.

Thank you very much for joining us today on the broadcast. It's nice to have you with us and we welcome you to the show.

Carolyn Herbert

Thank you so much. I appreciate being here and having this opportunity to talk to you.

Jim Masters

It is our pleasure our pleasure. And I love this topic and what you're doing in this beautiful beautiful work and that's legacy building as well. Forty years as a special education school administrator and you felt you could have just retired there if the 40 years that that is you know award winning and metal earning. Yes that's. You could probably write a few books on that career as well. But you felt there was something that you could offer. There was even more that you could do for humanity at large. What inspired you when you look at your life's journey maybe inspirations even when you were a kid that led you to want to do this kind of work and even create her wine jelly.

Carolyn Herbert

Well it's, it's an interesting story. I don't know how I really ended up here. There wasn't really a plan but when I retired, we retired to come to Charlottesville which is wine country in Virginia and my mother loves wine.

Now so we can get quite a bit. But she wanted some. She loves the flavor special that for breakfast lunch and dinner. So when I was making homemade bread I figured out how to make the wine jelly. What I didn't know at the time is that it actually had too much alcohol in it. So we had to come up with a process to remove the alcohol in order to do it as, as a business.

But we had started this. And then my family member who I'm very close to did get into some trouble and with my background in mental health in the special ed departments as a teacher you know all the way up to the administration, and I felt like I had an opportunity to probably reach out and help more people that had those kinds of difficulties in some form. When our family member got into trouble and was arrested, there was a need to give him something that he could have you know a little bit of money for spending there for getting toothpaste soap things like that that you assume they're given but they're really only given such a short supply. And so with that in mind I start go into some craft shows and in the area it picked up as quite a business. So a few months later which was actually in June of 2017 which is just two years ago this month we, we had our first sale wholesale of our Herbert's Wine Jelly.

So it started as a way to fund you know some of the people that we knew that truly were incarcerated and needed a little extra money. With that said WE DECIDED WELL HEY WHEN HE GETS HOME let's have a business for him. So it grew from there. I met other people that were in very similar situations that had loved ones that were incarcerated, didn't know what they would do when they came home. And we got together and started talking and when the guys would say to me, "Well you know Mom told me about this", and can I be part of the company? and I say sure. What do you want to do. Well so it really started from the employees up. My family member decided that his product would be the herb dips so he with his along with his wife and other family members were able to come up with the recipes they wanted. They tried and those on the outside were still trying to make it the best possible getting input from them. But while on the inside he had the opportunity to develop the, the packaging, decide how you wanted it packaged. How did he want the label to look. What is the name on the label. All of the things that keep them involved from day one. So that was an

amazing thing. Someone else called someone else's mom calls and said well you know my son wants to be involved. His name happens to be Pat. And I said well what does he want to do. And he said "Well I don't know". I said we'll pick a product. And he decided that he wanted peanut butter. So we call him peanut butter Pat but that is his product. So when he comes home which is going to be relatively soon he will take over that and produce more flavors of peanut butter than we've been able to do without him here. So he will also be one of our employees. So they actually start while they're still in, it gives them hope. It gives them a sense of wow this is not back into my life. I have something I don't think anybody. Thought at a moment when they were going up to you I hope I can grow. You know make jelly and peanut butter when I'm an adult. But that's not the point. The point is that we have a place. They can come home. They have a job. They know. They have a product that's theirs. What a self-confidence builder.

Jim Masters

Absolutely. Absolutely. And that's a beautiful beautiful thing. So the development of Herbert's Wine Jelly. What was it specifically about wine jelly that spoke to that wanted to be the featured product, other products developing out of that. But what was it about one jelly. Is this something that was made in your family over the years or something you always made. And did you start with a business background or did you throw a couple of pots and pans together and start really literally homemade from scratch.

Carolyn Herbert

Homemade from scratch. My mother as I mentioned loved wine. So I made wine jelly one year. I always tried to find something unique for Christmas as gifts and things like that and when I found it, not realizing that it was not legal to sell, you know which was fine I can give it this gift which was where I started. But she loved it. We have Apple Merlot, we have BlackBerry Cabernet Sauvignon. I have Pear Pinot Grigio you know things that you can do with them because we do a lot of cooking with them as well. So when my mother moved in with, because she had to there were one too many potatoes in the dishwasher if you know what I mean. She moved in and we you know I tried to do things to make her last year as positive as possible so why generally just sounded like a fun thing to do. And I had two pots I had a stove and that's all I needed. That's all I needed to get going. So my two pots and the stove has now grown to two pots a stove and a mixer. I still do not have a large need for a lot of equipment. My cousin has moved here from, retired and moved here from Boston and is now working with our Web site and and design and such. But again you know he's this is a volunteer piece. He sees the need for these people who have mental health issues before or after they end up having a felony if we look at the prison population we know that the majority of them have a mental health issue.

And some crimes are harder than than others to deal with. So I think that when we look at the type of crimes that are done and the. Recidivism of the, the population. People think that people have different, they have misconceptions about what really happens. There are some crimes where yeah most of the people that come out you know the guards will say "See you later" because they know you're coming back. But in some cases the recidivism is extremely low. And I'm gonna hit a point that is not necessarily our situation but one that we do push to hire and those are sex offenders because people don't understand the difference between an offender and a predator, an offender has never touched anybody.

An offender may have just looked at a picture online. And they have a mandatory minimum to serve and they're on a sex offender list for the rest of their lives. So those guys will never be able to work in even a restaurant or a store or something where your children are around and yet their recidivism rate is less than 3 percent whereas almost any other crime is above 50 percent, and into the 60s and 70s percent of recidivism. So this is a population that I feel even a little bit more strongly about because it's a hidden one just like mental health is. And all of these guys who have done this may be

a part get it certainly have mental health issues. If you've been in prison for more than a year you actually suffer PTSD. So you do have a mental health issue.

I think that my training in the special ed world gave me the strength to go forward but I did not know a thing about business working in a school division is not like the business world. I was extremely blessed to have people kind of walk into my life. I had a friend's husband, who's more like family, who came in and just help me set up all my accounting. I had somebody else come in and help me set up something else. People that I didn't know I had someone come up to me and say I really love what you're doing I want to open one of these in Texas. And they did.

All they did was they purchased the right to my recipes and we worked together and boom he has two pots and a stove going into his place to in a commercial kitchen.

Jim Masters

That is amazing.

Carolyn Herbert

Well you know my goal is to help as many people as possible. You know you can say that mental health, and mental illness is more accepted. Well the words are but the people aren't. And we need to make sure that they have a safe and comfortable place where if one day they really, really can't handle something because for whatever reason. They need to be able to talk about it or at least call me and say I can't do it today. I can't handle it.

And not worry about getting fired.

Jim Masters

Did anyone try to talk you out of doing any of this over the years?

Carolyn Herbert

Well you know it's only been two years. So I'm a little bullheaded. I hate to admit that but anybody that knows me knows that. And you know if you tell me I can't do something it makes me do it all the more. I had some health issues growing up and people said I couldn't do this and that well I proved them wrong. And I think I'm still doing that. I'm proving that I can make a difference in these lives of men and women that I have now hired that will take care of that I do have 10 that are or will be employed before long the guys that are still inside for example the one who has the herb dip and the peanut butter. Those guys when a when peanut butter sells that profit goes into an envelope. So when they come home they will have some money to buy a new razor a new toothbrush new clothes something things is going to help start their life again.

So they're coming home not only to you know the ability to purchase some things but they're coming home to a job. They're coming home to support one of the other things that I think is very important in what I do is I asked who their major support person is. And I include them in the discussion of what this job is about. And I have the opportunity to talk to them, their supporter, so if something is going on and if that person isn't ready to come and say you know this is what's going on, their supporter can call me and say they're having a really rough time right now. I don't have to know the details. It's not about that. It's about knowing how to deal with them and help them through whatever it is.

Jim Masters

That's incredible that you approach it that way. That's wonderful. You know we're talking about every sentence is a life sentence because when you get out of prison that tends to what happens and you know the day you leave prison they give you back the stuff and they say you know "see you soon" because they think the person is going to be coming back. When it comes to mental illness that is so pretty invasive and we hear it in our news too almost on a daily basis. The question we have to ask our guests is are these folks in prison because they're bad people who don't contribute to society or

are they a danger to others or are they ill. They refuse care. I mean there's a lot of different things I guess to think about.

Carolyn Herbert

I think that people who yeah I honestly think that the majority of people who do things. Do you have of the mental health. Their mental health right. I would say that people get involved in drugs because they don't have the confidence the ability to control certain things in their lives. I think that people that look at you know people that burglarize things are going to come out and probably do it again. But when you look at some of the people that are not going to do that, when I look at the repeat rate for people that look at pornography on on the Web site or something and have been chided for that and have done their sentence, you know, the likelihood of them doing it again is only three percent at the most. So. Those are the people that I know. I want to help everybody but what I really want to help is those who want to be helped. You know there is a difference. There is a difference. I will go to the State Police if I need an employee and I will say no. Who do you have this out that really really wants to go somewhere in this world. And they'll tell me I've gotten three or four of my people straight from the State Police. It's great. I work with the police. Our guys know, and girls, know not to fear the police. It's not a negative it's a positive. We work together. That's how you're going to get through the peace. One thing that I think is so important that I have learned recently is that people that come out of prison feel so much shame. And the shame is something that keeps them from moving forward because they're embarrassed to put themselves out there. Well they don't have to. I'm only done it for him.

Jim Masters

That's right. You have. Yeah that's exactly right. So people who are on the extremes of mental illness even if they're getting help. It really is a struggle. You know every day very few employers are willing to say no I get it I understand and help end the cycle of recidivism. But you're here you're in the forefront saying no. You know there are people too and let's help them right.

Carolyn Herbert

Yes. I think that you know the beauty of this is that you know my husband live retired you know we don't have a whole lot there but we're happy with what we have and where we are and and all in life. And you know we're supposed to be here for the next generation. At least that's the way I see it. And if we can make a step and have some people feel better about themselves you know get off of federal assistance get off of having other people have to care for them and be able to have the pride in doing their own job their own work et cetera. I think that that is really what we should be doing for our future, for my grandchildren, for my great grandchildren that I don't have yet for you know anyone down that road. You know I'm I'm still only in my 60s. It sounds like yeah you should be retired and your feet up but it doesn't mean that my life has ended it means I can give back. I've done my thing and it's time for me to work for others.

Jim Masters

Exactly right. Absolutely. So as far as everybody getting along with each other how does that come into play?

Carolyn Herbert

Well there's an interesting thing and that is that by law felons are not allowed to work with other felons, or not allowed to socialize with other felons. But when you've been locked up you only associate with felons. You don't really have the opportunity to associate with anyone else. And then when you get out any friendship that you've made you shouldn't be able to maintain. So these guys have the opportunity because you can work together. Obviously you can work together. It's the one

place that they have comrades that they really understand it's like having been in a war and losing your war time buddies the minute you leave where you're not allowed to talk to him again here they haven't all been in the same place obviously but they've all experienced. What I'm calling the war and it gives them a lot of comfort and they know that they have to work together and help each other because they're all there, they do not have a problem with that. We also do a lot of things individually. Yeah one can make stuff here. We have three different. Well we have two different kitchens. I'm looking to get a third one if I can swing it. Hence we need sales, but with that said you know we do work in different places. We come together at different times. But we don't all come to one factory and work together every day. It's not like that. Some of these people want to come home and hide their head never poke their head out of their house again. But there's still plenty of things that they can do from the inside. So we we just use that to our best ability.

Jim Masters

Exactly right. And you know it's so invaluable to say yeah I've had a job and I can go to CAROLYN HERBERT for recommendation the next person who hires that person isn't the first person who has taken a chance on somebody struggling with an illness such as mental illness or a former felon. Right? And that's an important to note.

Carolyn Herbert

One of the things that is kind of side note to Herbert's Wine Jelly is we're opening a non-profit business that will have two things.

It will have its employment agency for families, and we will do the vetting of their of all their credentials through the State Police, and we will also have a website for felons, ex felons to be able to sell their wares their crafts their art, their talents that they've been able to enhance while they're in or learn about while they're in leather crafting, woodworking. Some of the things that they do learn in, in prison and they can continue that on the outside and others will have a safe and secure place to purchase them without saying wow I'm giving a felon my name and address. This will be provided in a safe and secure site to purchase some of their goods and we will have to things from people all over the nation that can come out in a few more months.

Well in the works with that's.

Jim Masters

Wonderful that's wonderful. That's fantastic. You know you're also giving you're giving them a purpose too because they still have a purpose inside and a reason to wake up every day not just count the days until release right which is really an absolutely.

Carolyn Herbert

Absolutely. They are totally into how what's going on. And if I went to a conference recently and they were saying well no I need to know what's going on I need you to e-mail me twice a day once a day isn't enough. I need to know what you're doing. So you write I'm working with it was on you know felons and how they feel and how they deal with their, their shame etc. So it's very healthy for me to get the training to.

Things like that that are very important I keep up with stuff and it helps my family too. We do have a family member so I'm all about helping. A little selfish from the beginning because you know I want him to be OK.

Jim Masters

That's right exactly. So is it just the wine jelly or do you have these other products as well right that we do or have touted introduction.

Carolyn Herbert

Absolutely. On the Web site on our Web site Herbert Wine Jelly dot com we have the herb dips we have the peanut butter we have twelve flavors of the of the jelly we have three on the peanut butter and five of that we have a whole host of suggested uses and recipes for all of them, seasoning mixes, absolutely. You know the dill on some on some fish on the grill or the always Pineapple Chardonnay on some chicken when you grill it. We have a host of recipes on online. We're also on Amazon. So that's another great place to look. There's a link directly on our Web site as well. And you know I think the important piece is that the more that's purchased the more people I can hire. So it's not just because there are flavors or magnificence that you should get them but know that every purchase means that we're getting closer to getting another person onboard. And I think that's huge. That's a huge piece that it's not. Yes it's about the product because it's a really good product. We have earned Virginia's Finest awards and we've been highlighted other places. But you know it's really about the people and the more we settle the more people we can help.

Jim Masters

Which is really important. What do you see for the future of Herbert's Wine Jelly in this model that you're dedicated to. I know you're starting the nonprofit which is more of an employment agency for those with mental health issues. What are some of the other things that you see for the future.

Carolyn Herbert

Well I really would like to expand more across the country with this concept, this idea. And you know like I said there was a place in Texas that has purchased the opportunity to use all of my recipes and they changed the name of their company it's Twisted Vine and they use my recipes. They have two pots and a stove, you know it's still a small based operation but they too are hiring the right kind to help my mission.

And if we could get other people that were interested in starting that elsewhere in the country that would be amazing. I mean we're there to help all the way through because it is something that would help. Just one example and I don't mean to harp on the sex offender piece but let's.

Eighty five percent of the sex offenders that are listed as sex offenders are actually no contact. They have never touched anybody. So that's an interesting point. But, you know with, with that in mind you know we have got to get out there and do some some work otherwise. But if we could have places for people to, to have jobs to, to maintain a regular life give back to the community. And all it would just be an amazing amazing way to have everyone you know be able to have less fear have less. I don't know I want to be able to walk the streets and not worry. And I think if they go home tired and they want to sleep and they know they're getting up for work the next day you don't have that kind of that fear anymore. So I would really like to see some other people start these opportunities for people. And you know we do help all the way through we help the one in Texas. Been a wonderful opportunity. And remember I'm only two years old. This is my birthday month for the business two months, two years is all I've done this. So if we can do this in two years just think how many people we can start to really help in another two years.

Jim Masters

Exactly. Exactly. That's right Carol and this early. I can't believe the half hour is gone. It went by so extraordinarily fast.

It's it's quite a tale it's quite a story and it's quite a mission and legacy building that's happening here and you're taking all of this passion and enthusiasm for what you do and who you are and what you're about you and your husband and the family and the folks involved in giving back. And there's nothing more important than that when you can pay it forward and inspire others. And such a beautiful way. I encourage folks to go to the Web site. It's Herbert's Wine Jelly dot com. I'll spell that, h e r b e r t s w i n e j e l l y dot com. Herbert's Wine Jelly dot com. Take a look at some of the amazing products that they have. And again a hundred percent of the proceeds go back to the employees which is a very rare and special and beautiful thing. Carolyn thanks for joining us on the

show. Hope we get a chance to chat some more down the line. It would be a pleasure. And we appreciate your taking time out of your day today to share with us your wonderful story here and CUTV News Radio Live.

Carolyn Herbert

Thank you Jim. I really appreciate it.

Jim Masters

You are very, very welcome. You enjoy the rest of your day. Keep up the amazing work you're doing. And again folks I do encourage you to go to Herbert's Wine Jelly dot com to learn about all the work you're doing. And of course enjoy some absolutely outstanding products too. That I'm sure you will fall in love with, makes great gifts all kinds of different reasons for it. So check that out Jim masters here for all of us at CUTV News Radio Live. Thank you for being with us. Stay tuned. Another great episode of CUTV News Radio Live comes up in about 30 minutes right here. So join us for that till then. Bye for now and have a terrific day.

You've been listening to CUTV News Radio. If you want to learn more about our programming or perhaps be considered for a future show. Visit us on the web at www.CUTVnews.com. And if you enjoyed listening to today's show subscribe to our podcast on iTunes or Stitcher and be sure to write a review. Thanks for listening. And from all of us at CUTV News Radio we hope you have a productive and inspired day.