



- Kelly Scanlon: Joining us on this episode of Banking on Kansas City is Jane Preuss, a lawyer turned publisher whose mission is to spread joy using her magazine as a tool. Welcome Jane.
- Jane Preuss: Hello.
- Kelly Scanlon: Glad to have you here. You know, your career path has really taken a sharp turn in the last couple of years. You were an attorney who was practicing law in employment and litigation matters and now you're publishing a magazine. Tell us about that transition and what led up to it.
- Jane Preuss: Sure. I have two girls. They're 12 and 13 years old and my husband is also a lawyer. He had spent quite a bit of time traveling and we realized that we both couldn't continue down this path and raise two amazing girls. Probably several years I have been considering doing something different. I had looked into going back to school. I had done research. I had met with a PhD psychologist who does kind of helps you assess what would be a good fit to feed your soul versus draining your soul and what your aptitudes are, that sort of thing. I was actually standing on a soccer sideline when I heard that the owner of Leawood Lifestyle was looking for someone to take the magazine over. I couldn't shake the thought. I just couldn't get it out of my head.
- In the meantime, I'm going in and out of the law office every day. I'm trying cases for clients. I'm representing major corporations, and I just could not get this out of my head. At some point, my husband and I both agreed I should look into it. I negotiated with the owner from about April of last year until August, finally signed the paperwork in August, wound down my law practice, and took a leap of faith. Here I am, I've been doing this since October of last year.
- Kelly Scanlon: When you have those things that you just can't shake, you just can't shake them. There's something speaking to your soul in those kinds of situations, you just can't ignore it. You plunged into publishing. Did you have any kind of a background in publishing?

Jane Preuss: Well, when I graduated from college, I had a degree in mass communications and political science. I had a job at Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati. My dad talked me into going to law school instead of taking that position. That's kind of how I ended up practicing law back in Kansas City. There's been something inside of me that whole time that wanted to do something different, but I didn't want to let my dad down of course.

Kelly Scanlon: There really was something that was missing, your degree that you got, your degree in mass communications, it was what you really wanted to do all along.

Jane Preuss: Mass communications, marketing, I'm a people person. I wanted to do good things in the community and to help businesses grow and succeed. Doing commercial litigation while you're certainly defending the bottom line and protecting corporate America's piggy bank, that wasn't something that I felt passionate about.

Kelly Scanlon: That is so important and what you're going to spend so much of your day doing. Tell us about the magazine, its editorial focus and who it serves.

Jane Preuss: It's the only Kansas City based publication that goes to every single home in Leawood. Plus,, we have a few thousand online subscribers and a robust social media presence, digital presence.

Kelly Scanlon: If you don't live in Leawood, you can still subscribe to it?

Jane Preuss: Absolutely. Yes. You can get it every month and you can also follow us on social media. We're really working to boost our presence there, and we have lots of influencers helping us. I didn't know what an influencer was until the last year. It's a whole new world. In any event, we are focused on the community. We are focused on telling the stories of the folks who are in our community and bringing good news and spreading joy in the community. When I say community, even though the magazine goes to every single home in Leawood, we are interested in the greater Kansas City area and bringing the news as to what's going on in Kansas city to the residents of Leawood.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, there were such a mobile community, both sides of the state line, you might live in Leawood but you might work in any of the suburbs or in downtown Kansas City so we're all one big part, one big community.

Jane Preuss: Right.

Kelly Scanlon: Most of your recipients are Leawood but your editorial is much broader. Tell us about what you hope to accomplish with the magazine. You said you want to tell joyful stories, good stories. A little more specifically, what do you want to accomplish?

Jane Preuss: I have been involved in the nonprofit community in various ways. Frankly, since I was a little girl. I used to do Meals on Wheels with my mom. I also volunteered at an old folks home when I was in senior center when I was in high school. It carried over to college and law school. When I was in law school, I volunteered for MOCSA. I answer the hotline, the overnight hotline and would meet victims at the hospital. I've been involved in the community ever since, but I was finding it difficult to have time to raise a family and to be integrated in the community as a lawyer. This was my way to use something to do good things in the community and we're doing that. We're using the magazine to do good things, to promote good causes, to spread joy as a catalyst for those things in the community.

Kelly Scanlon: It sounds like it's very similar to your desire to publish that you had been tamping down for so long, you had that desire from an early age. You have a desire to give back and to be involved in good causes. This sounds like a great marriage of the two.

Jane Preuss: I think it is. I'm having fun anyhow.

Kelly Scanlon: Well, yes, and that's important too. In addition to shining a spotlight on the good things that are going on in Kansas City neighborhoods, do you encourage your staff and well, like yourself personally, you've already talked about some of the causes you've been involved in, but do you encourage your staff and others who are involved in the publication to not only tell the stories but to lend time and resources to bettering greater Kansas city community? If so, in what way?

Jane Preuss: Absolutely. You know, we have a team of writers and most of the writers are freelancers who are a lot of them are stay at home moms or bloggers, and all those folks are good people. My editor and I are very close and we have the same attitude towards helping the community and doing good things. It's so fun. I actually chatted with her this morning and said, remind me of some of the things that we've done together, or that she has taken the primary responsibility for with respect to doing good things. There are so many stories that nobody knows about. Angela Broockerd is my editor's name. She has been integral in so many different, really feel good stories in the Kansas City area. She really likes to bless other people. She likes to do it quietly.

She's not involved on a board or anything like that but she'll hear a story and she will find a way to fix whatever the issue is or fix what's going on. For example, her son runs cross country and there was a teammate of her sons who had holes in his shoes and he lived in section eight housing, low income area and couldn't afford new tennis shoes. Angela took it upon herself to go to KC Running store and say, this kid has holes in his shoes. Is there something we can do? They didn't even bat an eye. I mean, they couldn't wait to give this boy new shoes. I think they brought them in. They did it in such a way where they had a voucher. He didn't know that this was kind of a-

Kelly Scanlon: Right, preserving some dignity there.

Jane Preuss: Yes, yes, and KC Running store, I believe they offered actually to buy new shoes for anybody on that cross country team who needed it because it's kind of a low income school. They wanted no credit. They didn't want anyone to know. They wanted to do it quietly behind the scenes. I think there are so many of those stories and Angela has participated in many of them. I kind of tag along with her and we come up with ways to do these types of things all over town.

Kelly Scanlon: What do you think are some of the best untold stories in Kansas City right now? There's so many changes that are going on and it seems like every day there are new and exciting stories that make all the major publications but there's other ones that are going on too. In the position that you hold, you're probably privy to some of those. What would you say are some of the best untold story right now?

Jane Preuss: I think that's a great question. First of all, I think Kansas City is such a remarkable city. I think that the folks here care beyond measure and support each other and lift each other up in such a way that I think there is no city like it. I truly believe that. I've done a lot of traveling, spent a lot of time in other places, have lots of friends in other communities and there is something special about Kansas City. I think that's evidenced by these stories. You know, one example I can think of is Darol Rodrock, he's a home builder. Darol Rodrock grew up in the foster system and he has a heart for children that are aging out of the foster system. He has single handedly started a foundation that helps kids aging out of the foster system. He has, I believe, built apartment complexes providing a place to live for these kiddos, providing resources for them. There are other people now that are stepping up to help him.

For example, John Coats is the GM of the Audi dealership that is located, it's the one off of I-35 across the highway from Aristocrat. John Coats heard about Darol Rodrock's passion, and he is working to donate cars to kids aging out of the foster system. Let me tell you, these two men, I do know John Coats personally, I don't know Darol Rodrock personally. John Coats for example, as the GM of this Audi dealership has given tens of thousands, if not, hundreds of thousands of dollars towards local Kansas City based charities and nonprofits and just folks who need a leg up or help in a situation. He does it all without telling a soul. I think that's amazing. I actually tried to get him to make this the focal point of an ad campaign instead of having the ad show an Audi, let's say, each month this is what Audi did.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, show the philanthropic side.

Jane Preuss: Right, because if you knew there's more than one Audi dealership in the Kansas City community and one of them is giving tens of thousands of dollars a year towards local nonprofits, where would you buy your Audi?

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, people want to support a cause. Talk to us now a little bit more about your magazine, its business model and where you hope to take it.

Jane Preuss: Yes, Leawood Lifestyle, its parent company is Lifestyle Publications. Lifestyle Publications, I mean it's basically a franchise operation, although I can guide the content and direction of my magazine and my publication in whichever way I see fit. Lifestyle Publications provides the back office services, accounting. There is a team of designers if necessary for any of our business partners, but generally they provide the back office services to make my life easy so I don't have to worry about accounting or collections or anything like that. I can just be out and about in the community looking for good stories. Leawood was, I think I said, the very first magazine and it was a corporate magazine until I bought it back in October. Well, I signed the paperwork in August but I started in October of last year, and so it was the first corporate magazine and now it's mine.

Kelly Scanlon: What a great feeling. What have you learned about yourself as the publisher of this magazine? It's a new experience for you. You've had to learn something.

Jane Preuss: Oh geez, I have learned a lot. First of all, starting over in your mid 40s, it's crazy. There are days when I thought, what have I done? This is crazy. I found so much joy personally by telling stories of the folks in our community and getting out and meeting people, and there's so much more heart in what I'm doing now versus defending corporate America's piggy bank. I hate to put it that way, but that's what I was doing previously.

Kelly Scanlon: At least for you personally, it's much more fulfilling.

Jane Preuss: It's much more fulfilling. Yes. I mean, what have I learned about myself? I guess that any of us can do anything if we put our mind to it, if we have our heart in it and we have a team willing to support us and back us up.

I couldn't have done it without my husband and his support. I certainly couldn't do it without Angela Broockerd, I mean really, she's Leawood Lifestyle just as much as I am. I mean, the two of us make a great team and we have a really good time.

Kelly Scanlon: Has there been anything from the time you spent as an attorney that has transferred over and served you well in the magazine publishing business?

Jane Preuss: Yes. Frankly, the magazine publishing business is not only about telling stories. I mean, the way we make revenue is selling ads. I sell a lot of ads myself, but my clients are business partners. They are not somebody that I want to take their money, slap an ad in the magazine and they never hear from me again. All my clients have heard me say that to them. I want to partner with them, I want to help them. I want to drive people to their business personally. I mean, somebody says, hey, I'm looking to remodel my home. Who would you recommend? Jenny Manka from Manka Interiors. She's one of my business partners and she does beautiful work, absolutely beautiful. She's relatively new. It's a second career for her too. That's just one example. I want to partner with people, I want to serve my clients. I think you get a lot further in life if your

attitude is service rather than what can they do for me. I want to service my business partners and make sure that it is a mutually beneficial relationship. Frankly, that's how you succeed as a lawyer as well.

Kelly Scanlon: You keep mentioning partners, when you use that term, you're talking about the folks that you're working with now out in the community, but what partners? Using the term loosely, what partners helped you as you made the transition and as you took on this new role?

Jane Preuss: Sure. Well certainly when I say business partners, I'm referring to my advertisers, although I don't think of them as advertisers. They're my business partners and we're telling a story with each of their ads. Plus, all the editorial that's in the magazine is original content and its local stories. Nothing in our magazine is paid when it comes to content. Only advertisements are paid, that is one thing that makes us unique. Most other publications that are in Kansas City have a lot of content that's paid, meaning I'll give you \$10,000 if you write this article. We don't do that.

Kelly Scanlon: It's earned content.

Jane Preuss: Right. The only way that we make money is through advertisers. Your question was who has helped me along, you know, my very first business partner in the magazine arena was Jean-Paul Wong. He owns Pure Workplace Solutions. Jean-Paul and all of the rest of my advertisers, Meg Hoban from Prairiebrooke had been so supportive. I mean, Meg Hoban tells me over and over how much fun she's having and what a great team we make and how her business has increased threefold. I think we'll be forever friends because you know, she's become a friend through all of this. Other partners in the community. While all of my colleagues at my former law firm, I was with Littler Mendelson when I retired, they're still dear friends. They were family. I mean, they know everything about me. They have been my biggest cheerleaders as well. Some of them, you get the magazine and reach out to me about it every now and then, and I still see them and chat with them, but they have been wonderful partners when it comes to helping me feel successful and confident in this next stage of my life.

Kelly Scanlon: A piece of business advice that we often get is that in addition to the associates or the employees that you have on your staff that you should also have a team of service professionals, bankers, accountants, attorneys. People that maybe you can't, you're too small to have on staff. Boy, when you need those people, you need them. I know that because of the business model that we've talked about. You have some of that covered on the accounting side, but what other kinds of professionals have you worked with that are helping you be successful?

Jane Preuss: Absolutely. Well, actually I do have a corporate lawyer that helps every now and then with an agreement or, I'm not a corporate lawyer, I never was a transactional lawyer. Frankly, when I started out, I went to Country Club Bank and that's how I actually met Mary Thompson O'Connor who got me set up in

their system as a small business owner. I didn't know if they'd be willing to throw me a bone, but my goodness, they've been very supportive. Actually, my husband who's a lawyer also banks with Country Club Bank for his law firm. Both of us have been absolutely thrilled as small business owners the support that we've received from the folks at Country Club Bank. It's been amazing. It takes a village, it really does. As a small business owner or entrepreneur, I'm grateful to have that support from so many different factions, including our corporate office that provides accounting services.

Kelly Scanlon: Absolutely. I think a real key there is to get that team in place before you'd really need them because on the day that you can't make payroll or the day that you get sued, you already want to have that relationship in place, not when you're in a desperate spot and then you have to go out searching for the first time.

Jane Preuss: Yes. My dad used to say, any fool can panic and I think that's right. Better to have your team in place.

Kelly Scanlon: Love that. What would you say to other entrepreneurs who are trying to build their business but didn't necessarily have the background? That they're following a passion after a position in corporate America that they took for whatever reason when they were younger, but like you, they could not tamp down whatever their passion is and so they decided that they're going to make a business out of it. What would you tell them? What piece of advice would you give them?

Jane Preuss: Listen, listen, there are so many people that have good insights, folks who have done similar things to what I'm doing. Folks who have started their own businesses, folks who have some background that's relevant to mine. In fact, my social media person, Lauren Muth, I hope I'm pronouncing her last name correctly, M-U-T-H. Lauren just graduated from KU with a master's degree and she is an expert when it comes to digital strategy. I'm in my mid 40s and I could've said, this kid knows nothing, but Lauren is remarkable. I sat and I listened to her and she's right about so many things. Go check out my Instagram feed or Facebook because Lauren is doing a wonderful job promoting all of the things that we're doing in the community. I think it's listen and don't just think, oh I know how this works, I know how to do this, because all of us have the capacity to know more and to learn more and to do better.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. Great, great advice. Where can we find your website?

Jane Preuss: Well, so leawoodlifestyle.com. Now you're going to be taken to citylifestyle.com which it's really neat. We're really working hard on it, especially our parent corporation, but it will be hyperlocal information as to where you're located. If you're in Kansas City, it will show Leawood content, but it also might show what's going on in Kansas city for example. Leawoodlifestyle.com, we're Leawood Lifestyle on Facebook and Leawood Lifestyle on Instagram as well.

Kelly Scanlon: Well, very good. We really appreciate you being on the show today, Jane, and for the wonderful stories you're telling about Kansas City, this wonderful place we call home.

Jane Preuss: Well, thank you. Thanks for having me.

Joe Close: This is Joe Close, President of Country Club Bank. Following your joy when you find yours lays open a path forward, at least a purpose and allows passion to take hold in all areas of your life. Living your passion doesn't just end with you. It's like a ripple in a pond. It spreads from you to your family, to coworkers and friends, and ultimately impacts our community and our city. If you're not feeling fulfilled, take a leap of faith. Find your joy. Take a page from Jane's book. Share your passion with everyone you know, and you will move Kansas City. Thanks for tuning in this week. We're banking on you, Kansas City. Country Club Bank, member of FDIC.