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Laurie Wetterschneider
enjoys joining her jewelry design business with philanthropy. Photo by Kris Hanning.

TucsonLifestyle.com

TUCSON LIFESTYLE | MAY 2018 17

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Wise Beyond Careers

PHILANTHROPY IS AT THE HEART OF LAURIE WETTERSCHNEIDER'S LATEST CAREER — co-founder and jewelry designer for Laurie and Lisa Designs. Since March 2003, when she and her sister Lisa Peterson started the company, Laurie has donated more than \$2 million in retail value of jewelry to various charities, as well as proceeds from sales.

Jewelry design actually is Laurie's *third* career. She has "retired" twice before — once from radio station management and ownership in 1991, and again in 1999 as Director of Communications and Fund Development with Jewish Family & Children's Service. Even while working full time, philanthropy was on her mind. "My parents were, and continue to be, very philanthropic and devoted to the support of the arts," she says of her upbringing in New York. "I learned from them at a very early age always to give back to those who had less."

She has a "never take no for an answer" spirit to thank for her success in her chosen fields, and academic pursuits, as well. She attended a summer session at the University of Arizona between her junior and senior year in high school. Accepted to UA due to her exceptional grades and advance placement testing, she entered college early and received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree a month before her 18th birthday. During her college years, she worked three part-time jobs, one of which was at Judi Kirby PR, where she wrote press releases.

Her focus and determination were invaluable in her post-college jobs of selling ads for a radio station, and she stayed in broadcasting and worked her way into management and ownership. When she "retired" she looked for another interesting direction. She had done a considerable amount of volunteer work throughout her radio career, especially with United Way. "At the time the Director of Marketing for United Way knew of a 'new' position becoming available at Jewish Family & Children's Service for a Director of Communications and Fund Development," says Laurie. "I was hired for a part-time position, which within less than a month was made full time, as I had raised enough funds to justify my salary."



Jewelry designer Laurie Wetterschneider poses with a selection of items that she donates to charities. Photo by Kris Hanning.

During this time, she also became a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs Board of Directors and a Board, then later advisory board, member of the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona, among many board positions.

When Laurie embraced the non-profit world for her second career, she took a class on grant writing given by the Tucson Public Library. "I found grant research and writing very fulfilling and still do it for various non-profits from time to time on a pro-bono basis," she notes. "I also did seminars for non-profit and for-profit Boards with two of my friends and fellow Boys & Girls Clubs Board Members — Mark Irvin and David Lovitt — on how to build a better board and also the importance of volunteerism."

When she decided to step down after seven years at JFCS, she already was

General Chairman for Angel Charity for Children, Inc. — essentially carrying two full-time jobs. She was able to concentrate on the buildup to the Angel Ball and devoted her full attention to making that event successful, especially for Tu Nidito Children and Family Services, which was that year's beneficiary, along with Intermountain Centers for Human Development and The Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, whose Boards she sat on as part of her Angel Charity responsibility after they were funded.

Since then, her philanthropic duties have included positions (including chairmanships) with the American Heart Association (Board, Heart Ball and Fine Food Festival), Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson (Annual Holiday Auction, Benefactor Committee, board president,

major gifts chair, co-chair/co-founder of The EVENT, and more), American Red Cross, Humane Society of Southern Arizona and others.

It was in 2003 that her jewelry design career got its start. "My sister, mother and I took a beading class for fun. Lisa and I were hooked immediately so our mother bought us the tools and some beads and *findings*. We both started making pieces, and our husbands gently suggested we figure out what to do with all the new jewelry! I spoke with my friend Karol Gugino, who owns Elements, and she was extremely supportive in selling our jewelry at her store. Next, I introduced myself to the owners of the retail store at Canyon Ranch where I did 60 to 70 Trunk Shows a year for five years. The best part of the business was working with my sister, who lives on the East Coast, and creating a business whereby we worked together on a day-to-day basis.

"At that time Lisa was designing and making approximately 20 percent of the pieces and I would sell with her help on marketing. She also thankfully convinced me to purchase a computer program called Jewelry Designer Manager, which

specifically was designed to track each part that went into the jewelry and all sales. This was the best investment we made! Lisa also helped with the legal work, and is currently working as a full-time attorney. Even though she started back full-time four years ago, the company will always be Laurie and Lisa Designs."

The sisters had a website created so they could sell around the world, and Lisa's legal background and artistic talents were invaluable. "And our husbands have been very helpful as well. Larry (her husband of 28 years) would go to the gem show to purchase gemstones and pearls while Laurie manned the trunk shows, and Lisa's husband John also was engaged in the company, as were both her sons.

Laurie gravitates to creating chunkier looks with pearls, turquoise and coral, whereas Lisa prefers more delicate looks made with smaller gemstones. This worked out well because it provided a range of looks for their customers. It is usually Laurie's favorite looks that she donates as silent auction items for fundraisers here and in Carmel, California, where she and Larry have another home, as well as throughout the country.

Laurie's husband Larry retired in 2005 from managing a brokerage firm for 25 years, and also served on 25 nonprofit boards during his career. He now works with Laurie on learning about the needs of their two communities. "We support numerous charities through our personal philanthropic fund," she says. "His financial knowledge helps me when I am on a board to help steward the organization on a healthy financial path."

She and Larry have been married since 1990 and both enjoy golf, although Laurie's favorite part is being outside with friends, rather than the sport itself. The duo also travels, and has visited the Mid East, India, Asia, South and Central America, Europe, Canada and Africa.

"Each day is truly more wonderful than the one before. I have learned how quickly things can change and that the most important thing is one's health and one's family. I have been fortunate to enjoy three careers, and the many wonderful people with whom I have had the pleasure and honor of working. I am thankful for this chapter of my life and believe a well-known quote, 'Life is not about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.'" — Anne Kellogg