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Sheila Long: Hello, everybody. Welcome to the Head of the Table podcast. My name's Sheila Long, and I will be your host for today's show.

[0:00:30] Today, I have a wonderful guest on our show. She runs Just Goods, pretty much right next door to MalamaDoe. And her name's Lisa – can you pronounce your last name?

Lisa Castagnozzi: I have to do it several times a day. Ca-sta-no-zee.

Sheila Long: Castagnozzi. Okay, great. So she's been a MalamaDoe member for many years, and we've known each other for years prior to opening MalamaDoe, just through being in the Shorewood community.

[0:01:05]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

Sheila Long: So welcome to the show, Lisa.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Sheila Long: Yeah, no problem. So can you tell me a little bit about what it is that you're doing with your business?

Lisa Castagnozzi: My business is Just Goods. It's retail space in Shorewood. It's really more of a community space as well featuring local artists and makers, fair trade artists from overseas, and eco-friendly goods and vegan goods.

[0:01:41] So it's kind of a mix of products and gifts and home goods and coffees, teas. You know, things that people need that they can be kind of connected to, either locally or globally. And so it's a real mix of things, and it's been a very interesting endeavor.

[0:02:07] And I've been in existence for two and a half years.

Sheila Long: Awesome. Wow. Okay, so why has it been an interesting endeavor?

Lisa Castagnozzi: Well, it's bringing together all these different elements that I've had interest in throughout my life. So bringing together the local and global and then meeting different people and sourcing things from around the world and having people come in and bring me things to show me, and then researching what's eco-friendly, how can I do better packaging and shipping using eco-friendly materials.

[0:02:50] So everything's been kind of a learning process and interesting along the way.

Sheila Long: Yeah, that's really cool. It's great when you just always have to grow and think in new ways, but when you love what you do, it's really cool, because then you're just learning about stuff that you really care about.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right, right. And I think one is very lucky when they can do the work that brings them joy, even though sometimes it's really hard or stressful or challenging.

[0:03:25] You know, many things are in life, and so ideally, you can choose something that at least you're very interested in.

Sheila Long: Yeah, that is great. I know, I look around my life right now and just, like, who's in it, and things that I've received, or what I do, and it's pretty much all the fruits of my labor of building the business. And it's so fun, isn't it?

[0:03:51]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yeah, it's really interesting and rewarding, I would say.

Sheila Long: So Just Goods is right next to MalamaDoe pretty much. You're like one door down on Oakland Avenue in Shorewood.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

Sheila Long: So you're a member of the Shorewood BID, and you've been really doing wonderful things keeping the MalamaDoe community abreast of what has been going on with COVID 19 and with the business improvement district.

[0:04:19]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

Sheila Long: So thanks for that.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right. It's important. I think all these different localities around the country are trying to help small businesses navigate all of this, and Shorewood is doing a really great job, and so are you, with your network that you've created sharing resources.

[0:04:43]

Sheila Long: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yeah.

Sheila Long: Yeah, and you too. So how are you adapting with COVID? I bought soap from Lisa. We didn't have soap that really foamed, and I had bought a gift at Christmas for some family in California and New York. I shipped them this

awesome soap and then I was like, I need the really awesome soap so everyone in my house can really use soap with bubbles and really get into cleaning your hands.

[0:05:15] And then you dropped it off, so that was awesome. So thanks.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right. Yes, I have, well, pivoted my business for the time being. I closed the doors to my retail space early on – early march, I think – just feeling that I wanted to kind of – you know, I didn't feel like anything that I had was essential that people needed to come in to the store for, so I wanted to close early.

[0:05:51] And right away, I put up a website, which I had been meaning to do for many years. So that was a great opportunity to do that. And I have become a delivery driver, website developer, which I did before in my previous careers. And so nothing was new for me in that sense.

[0:06:19] So yeah, I was up and running with the website and trying to deliver what I deemed were some of the important things that people need right now: soap, for me, coffee, tea, laundry detergent, elderberry syrup, locally made, organic, to help support the immune system, hand sanitizer, naturally made by a woman in Bayside.

[0:06:50] And so a lot of local products. And soaps, things like that. So that's what I'm doing right now, because this is a short term period, and so I'm just focused really on that. And I will build out the website more, which is something I always wanted to do, and then bring in more of the fair trade and different artists and more eco-friendly things and continue with that and home deliveries, and then hopefully open the store again.

[0:07:22]

Sheila Long: Awesome. Sounds like your mind is in a really great place right now. You're upbeat, you have a good outlook for the future.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right. I mean, everything's obviously uncertain, but I feel so lucky to be healthy right now. I feel you have to let go a little bit of control, of worry, of panic, you know? If you can let go and just kind of, this is what we have right now, and so how are you going to switch things up, and how can you help, either through your business or through some sort of volunteer work?

[0:08:12] It's been kind of beautiful to see people helping each other locally and all over. People are doing fundraisers for these fair trade small artisans in countries around the world where they have very difficult circumstances right now. So there's lots of opportunity here in this time.

Sheila Long: That is really great. Thanks for just being that beacon of hope and just for reminding us really to just let go, right?

[0:08:43] Because we really can't do anything.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yeah. And I realized, you know, I am a bit of a control freak. I realized that from running my business. And maybe it's part of running your own business, because you are really solely responsible for the outcome. This has helped me let go of that a little bit.

Sheila Long: Yeah, it is hard to let go. It's hard to just not – and especially when things go wrong.

[0:09:14] You're like, [unintelligible]. But you're happier, because you've delegated. And maybe when things get back to normal, then you'll have to hire a delivery driver to [unintelligible] these people needing the eco-friendly products that you're serving.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

Sheila Long: And then you're a vegan too, right?

Lisa Castagnozzi: I am, yes. I've been vegetarian since I was 15 and vegan maybe three years. And it was always about the animals, which I just felt a connection to early on.

[0:09:47] So I also do animal rights activism and advocacy on the side. That's just part of who I am, and so to have a store, it had to be vegan. No animal products. You don't have to think about anything you're buying as far as animal cruelty.

Sheila Long: That is really great. Congrats.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Thanks.

Sheila Long: My son was a vegetarian. We've talked about this, right?

[0:10:19] And now my daughter is.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

Sheila Long: And they're just really into caring for animals and just anti-animal cruelty, obviously.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right. I think most people are. And so I really just try to educate and put opportunities out there for people to learn. I don't judge anyone. I ate meat for many years, and I was still eating dairy up until three years ago.

[0:10:52] And the more I learned, the more I just didn't want to support that system. I'm very compassionate with anyone, whether they eat meat, don't eat meat, vegetarian, whatever. I just like to put information out there for people.

Sheila Long: Okay, well, that's great. Do you still do that Facebook group?

[0:11:15]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yes, the meetup.com? That group?

Sheila Long: Isn't there the Facebook for vegetarians?

Lisa Castagnozzi: Oh, there's a Milwaukee Area Vegans on Facebook, and that's a great resource for anyone. You don't have to be vegan to be on there. I co-run a Meetup group on meetup.com, which is also like a vegan Meetup.

Sheila Long: Okay, all right.

[0:11:41] So when you started out your business, is there anything that you wish you would have known?

Lisa Castagnozzi: I think I would have tried to bring in people to support me early on or similar minded people to just help with the business, you know? Or get involved or be a partner.

[0:12:13] So yeah, I've done most things myself, and I'm learning how to delegate more, which is a thing I think a lot of people struggle with. Yeah, so that's really the only thing I can say.

Sheila Long: Okay. Yeah, delegation is hard, especially now when we're letting go of control, worry, and panic, right?

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

Sheila Long: In the new [unintelligible].

[0:12:44] Yeah, but it's good if you want your business to grow and to thrive and to really put forth your mission and everything that you're trying to accomplish.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Absolutely. That's my biggest lesson, for sure.

Sheila Long: Well, thanks for sharing.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Mm-hm.

Sheila Long: So Mother's Day's coming up, so we're trying to just kind of celebrate moms. It really stems from, first, we should always celebrate women, but also, it stems from the fact that with COVID 19, the vulnerable population part of it is the elderly.

[0:13:18] And we don't hear those stories. If those people are gone, we won't really hear those stories anymore. So [unintelligible] the story about your mom or something to inspire others for Mother's Day? Or someone else in your life?

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yes, I would love to share a little bit about my mom, just briefly. I was thinking about this today. We used to sort of make fun of her because she had this sign that said – this plaque – “If life gives you lemons, make lemonade.”

[0:13:55]

Sheila Long: I have that here! I do. It's from my grandma.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yes, okay. So you get it?

Sheila Long: Yeah.

Lisa Castagnozzi: You know, you kind of think it was cheesy, and okay, but really, she lived her life like that, you know? I mean, gosh, she went through the Depression. She went through the loss of two of her brothers in the war.

[0:14:23] She raised five children, which was not easy, had a divorce, started a career in real estate and traveled the world, by herself a lot of times. She was just resilient and amazing. And with such grace, through all of that.

[0:14:50] Just grace. I think that's one of her most inspiring traits, is just to not take things so seriously and take things to heart. For her, every day was an opportunity, and she just persevered.

[0:15:23] And also, she was very funny, so she was laughing all the time. And I think all those traits are really something I look to now during this time, and certainly as a parent, and a single parent. So I follow her example, or at least I try to learn from her.

Sheila Long: That's great. What a wonderful story, you know? And just what a great role model for you to have had.

[0:15:49]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right, right.

Sheila Long: You forget about how much laughter there was growing up. There were so many more visitors coming into the home and people just stopping by to say hi. I don't know if your house was like that growing up.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Sure, yes. Five kids, all the friends coming in and out.

[0:16:13] You know, she just handled it really, really well. Yeah, a lot of laughter. She was very funny. So I'm lucky. I'm very lucky. Yeah.

Sheila Long: Yeah, the word “grace” keeps coming up with all the people talking about their moms. Like, the word “grace.” And I don’t know if that’s generational or if that’s just something that, because we’re younger, and we’re looking at someone we look up to, if that’s just how we perceive them or what.

[0:16:43]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yeah, I don’t know. I’ve thought about that. I feel like we sometimes forget that our parents went through very difficult times. Most of them went through at least a world war or a depression, right?

Sheila Long: Mm-hm.

Lisa Castagnozzi: So I think these trying times sometimes will often change people for the better, if they can get through it. Then they have so much more appreciation for life and living and being in a state of grace.

[0:17:19]

Sheila Long: I totally agree. When I have been going out lately – I know we have a stay at home order – but just that people are a lot friendlier and I think a lot more just appreciative of just one another and just the little things, like a smile someone gives you or whatever. You see them on the sidewalk. They move over to the side, or you move over to the side so you can maintain the six feet of distance.

[0:17:48] It’s kind of goofy, but then it’s appreciated.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Absolutely. So I think we’re seeing some of that, you know? Some people will move toward fear and panic and hopefully eventually they’ll get through that too and then come to a little more compassion for everyone.

[0:18:14]

Sheila Long: Yeah, that will be just a wonderful experience. I don’t know, it just kind of depends on where you’re at in your life too.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yes, yes.

Sheila Long: But it’s great that you have that wonderful store where people can congregate and see all the great local artists and international artists that you showcase. And they can come there for great events and just get to meet likeminded individuals.

[0:18:42]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Yes, it's been really great. And you know, maybe there will be new ways to connect that may be different, but we're all connecting probably more than we were before, at least online, if we're lucky enough to be online. So we'll see.

Sheila Long: Yeah. That "lucky enough to be online," I've been thinking a lot about that lately. Like you, I was just thinking, you could do one of those community events and maybe Zoom in one of the artists or something. Some day.

[0:19:14] But then maybe they're not online, right?

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right. Some aren't, right. So it gives you perspective, for sure.

Sheila Long: Yep. All right, well, it's been really great just to have you right next to us down the street and just be able to pop in and see all the wonderful things that you have in your store and all the people that you support.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Thank you.

[0:19:37]

Sheila Long: Yeah. So thanks for being in our community too, and just for supporting us with the local business improvement district, and just for being one of those awesome people that are just a great role model for us all to look up to.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Oh, gosh, thanks so much, Sheila. You as well. Thank you.

Sheila Long: All right. Okay, and for everyone out there, thank you for tuning in. Oh, we need your social media handles. Where can people reach you?

[0:20:09]

Lisa Castagnozzi: Okay, well, the website is really where the action is right now. And it's justgoods.org. And then Facebook and Instagram are @justgoodsmke.

Sheila Long: Okay. And then she's also, when things open up, if you're listening to this, when things are back to normal, she's on Oakland Avenue. What's the exact address?

[0:20:36]

Lisa Castagnozzi: It's 4451 North Oakland, not far from the Colectivo.

Sheila Long: Yep, right, the Colectivo. We've got Boulangerie there as well.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Boulangerie, which is awesome, for coffee and bread, yep, and everything. Food.

Sheila Long: Yeah, it's a great block. Goody Gourmet. All kinds of stuff.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Right.

[0:20:57]

Sheila Long: All right, so thanks a lot, Lisa, and thanks to everyone for tuning in.

Lisa Castagnozzi: Thank you. Bye-bye.

Sheila Long: Bye-bye.

Thanks to everybody for listening to the Head of the Table podcast. Please feel free to look for us wherever you find your podcasts. Let your friends know as well. Thanks, everyone.