

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 141

Amy Williams

Music: [00:00:00] When you hear the horns and drums, you know it's time for the Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator powered by Evergy. Join us as we explore the world of business, leadership and entrepreneurship in Wichita. Learn from local business leaders and owners on how they have built and grown their companies and the challenges and opportunities they met along the way.

Coming to you from the Evergy room at the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce. Here are your hosts, Don Sherman and Ebony Clemens of Jim.

Don Sherman: Welcome to another edition of the WCBA Powered, of course, by Evergy. Ebony had to do some real work today, so I'll be holding it down. And uh, first one, thank you folks [00:01:00] for listening.

Don't forget to like us, love us, share us. We truly appreciate it today. We are excited to have my friend. I'm a super fan, so if I get giddy, just, just, just ignore me and remember that Amy Williams is here and we have a special edition of Journey Unseen, and you probably say, what is that? Journey Unseen is a three part series features women in the community and their leaders.

They share their unknown stories. You got that Amy? Unknown. We want Got it, got it. We want Good. So about their journey. So let's get into the unseen journey. Of Amy Williams, welcome to the

Amy Williams: show. Thank you. How excited to be here. How doing? I'm, I'm great. I'm great. Happy, uh, coming off a good weekend of, uh, after 4th of July, so I'll take it.

Don Sherman: Excellent then. Now did you, are you a fireworks

Amy Williams: person? I watched from a distance.

Don Sherman: Oh, a safe distance. You one of them. Okay, that's cool. Like I'll save like. A mile. I [00:02:00] mean, you could see it like from the river or something. Yeah. I'm



Amy Williams: good with that. Yeah, I'm good with that. When was the last

Don Sherman: time you popped

Amy Williams: a firework?

We won't talk about a long time ago. Okay. You're not

Don Sherman: that old. Quit trying to clam. Give us your name, title, what you do in life.

Amy Williams: Tell us about Amy. Alright, so Amy Williams, uh, native Witton from many moons ago. Currently I am the senior manager for Global Diversity, equity and inclusion for Spirit Aero Systems.

Um, moved away. So as I said, I was, I was with, uh, Cargill, uh, many moons ago, and, and it's their fault. I left Wichita. Um, I went to their global headquarters switch hats and did, uh, corporate social responsibility for about five years and then, uh, be bopped around, lost my mind, and went to the world of retail for a few.

Mm-hmm. For a few years went to Illinois, the suburbs of Chicago ended up in Charlotte, which I absolutely loved. Um, and then, [00:03:00] you know, I always joked that, you know, we have a lot of loved ones here, friends, family, and everybody said, well, when are you gonna come back to Wichita? And I was like, come back to Wichita to do what?

And I always knew the one thing I wanted to come back and do was, was kind of, if I were to do anything, would be the community role. That, uh, at the time, Brian Black, many people know Brian. Mm-hmm. Um, but Brian Black was in, and so when, uh, they talked to him about taking on a new role in hr, uh, Debbie Gann, my former, uh, boss, she's now retired, but Debbie Gann called My Bluff.

Um Oh, nice. Yeah. Yeah. So I ended up, they brought me back home.

Don Sherman: Excellent. Now, you said you went to Cargill, uh, corporate. That's

Amy Williams: Minnesota. Yep. Yep. Cargill's global headquarters is in, well, technically Zetta, uh, Minnesota, but yeah, right out of Minneapolis. Okay. Outside of Minneapolis. Okay.

Don Sherman: And how long were you

Amy Williams: there?

About five years. Okay. Um, yeah, and, and that was a lot of fun. I mean, it was. When I was in Wichita with Cargill, when I left, um, I was doing de and I work then, uh, for their, oh, okay. Animal protein businesses here in Wichita and [00:04:00] then left. And as I said, switch hats

left. HR went to corporate affairs and started doing, um, the community work for them.

But on a more global scale, I. So, yeah. So you grew up here? I did. East High, blue East Wichita State, shocker. Oh, that's, that's okay.

Don Sherman: Nevermind. It's okay. You went to East High.

Amy Williams: Yeah. Well, you know.

Don Sherman: Nice. So tell us about your title. I mean, that's long. It is a long title, so, so talk about that. Yeah. Global

Amy Williams: diversity, equity and inclusion.

Yes. So is it, so spare brought me back to do the community relations work, which I was doing for them the first five years I was here. And then, Um, just more recently, uh, actually in 2020 took on the DE and I work, so diversity, equity, inclusion, de and I for short. Um, and you know, my career has really been half and half, uh, half community or half de and I and the other half community relations.

Um, really what that looks like. It's funny. [00:05:00] Everybody's like, what is your, what do you do? I get that. I work with us all, so we play nice. In the sandbox together and that everybody's welcome in the sandbox. Right, right. So, um, you know, a little bit, uh, like an internal consultant almost, um, when you think about this work, um, that you are partnering with our business leaders, To really understand where are the gaps and opportunities where, um, we can help create, uh, a more, uh, inclusive, uh, environment for our employees across the board.

That everyone feels that sense of belonging feels like they have the equal opportunity and chance to succeed as, as anyone. So regardless of who you are, what walk of life you come from, you can come in and, and have that opportunity. Excellent.

Don Sherman: So we talk about spirit, of course. We know spirit, we know Boeing before Spirit.

And we know this is home for spirit. Yeah. Give folks the how big spirit is across

Amy Williams: the world. Yes. You know, it's interesting because only, [00:06:00] only spirit would go through a major acquisition in the middle of a pandemic. Wow. So we acquired, um, a part of Bombardier actually in, um, the fall of 2020. Whoa. Um, which, um, almost replicated our headcount, um, in the what or existing headcount.

So, When I, I would say when I joined Spirit, we were probably under 17,000. Um, and, you know, we were ramping up, uh, hugely. Uh, as we were progressing up through 2019. Uh, spirit got a little bit of a, what we call a double whammy with the 7 37 max grounding, which was a huge chunk of our business. And then the pandemic, so, Um, you know, coming out of, of, uh,

the pandemic, we were probably closer to around 10,000, and then you pick up a couple more thousand, uh, with the, the acquisition.

So it's, uh, been an exciting move. It really, um, expands our global footprint. It gave us a representation in [00:07:00] Morocco. Okay. In, um, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Belfast. Um, and then, uh, we have a little sales office in Dallas. And so again, picking up extra sites, extra reach, um, which is important as we continue to expand our footprint, um, with customers, you know, across the globe.

Don Sherman: I just wanted folks to know your scope, how I. How big the spirit is. Yep. Yeah. But let's get to you. Uh, tell us about growing up and how that might have affected your leadership development. I mean, you went to East, so put that aside.

Amy Williams: You know, um, you know, my mom probably would've, would say that I, uh, grew up.

Uh, quote, unquote a leader or, you know, as some might say, bossy. Um, you know, but, uh, always very inquisitive as a young child, I, it's funny, I have, you know, a younger brother who was about seven years younger than me, and I will say that was probably my first leadership opportunity. Nice. Um, he was always a good, uh, willing to go along for the ride.

Um, I was an oldest, [00:08:00] oldest. Child. Okay. So, you know, I think that I spent a lot of time in circles where you're with adults and you're somehow thinking you're one of the adults sometimes. Um, but I, you know, some of this really I think, started to come into fruition as I got into college. Um, I think, you know, high school came pretty easy for me, and I know, I think I just ho hummed along and didn't necessarily do a whole lot of.

Um, taking leadership opportunities, if you will. But once I got to college and, you know, you, I was on scholarships and it was kind of making sure that you were, um, Getting the biggest bang for your buck while you were there and the value out of that. And a lot of that I can contribute to the Hispanic American Leadership Organization, um, and really becoming involved there and eventually being their president in high school.

And so just nice. It was probably that initial exposure that helped, you know, realize that yeah, you can have influence and help move people along for the benefit, their benefit even, I mean, in some of the things that we were [00:09:00] able to, to accomplish together. Nice.

Don Sherman: So you've been a leader for a while. What's your definition, your definition of

Amy Williams: leadership?

You know, I, I think it falls in, in somewhere in that servant leadership space. I am, you know,

when I look at the teams that I work with, uh, you know, building a foundation of trust and collaboration are important for me. Um, I want to always be seen as, you know, the person that is there with the team, alongside the team, not necessarily.

Out front, always pointing the direction. So for me it's important to, to be a part, um, of the, a true part of the team.

Don Sherman: Excellent. I see why we get along. I love that servant leadership. What characteristic do you possess that is, uh, most beneficial in your leadership? I know you got many, but let's do one.

Amy Williams: Um, you know, I would say adaptability.

Um, you know, I think at, you know, I, I'm a big [00:10:00] student of, you know, and I'm a big, uh, proponent of strength finders and one of my strengths is that adaptability piece. And I think we can have. You can have the best laid plans and tensions, but if you are not somewhat adaptable in terms of when current thing, you know, the current environment moves or switches or something new comes up as far as an opportunity you gotta take advantage of, I'm able to do that.

Um, I have to, I think somehow, sometimes be a little cautious of it as well. We don't wanna go to run to the new next shiny new thing. Mm-hmm. But, so there's that awareness that you, you need to have, but, Adaptability I think is pretty important.

Don Sherman: Uh, what is one problem or issue or challenge that you have overcome that has taught, uh, your biggest lesson?

I.

Amy Williams: Uh, maybe a little bit, even just on the self-confidence side, I think that, you know, um, my family's a blue collar family and I am first generation, you know, college student [00:11:00] and in a corporate environment. And so when you think about, I. People to help lead the way very early on. It's no one that you just naturally know in terms of your family network.

There's, there's no one to kind of help lead that way. So you, you have to build trust and, and learn to, um, you know, lean on people that you build relationships with, who you admire and who you know, who you see as great leaders when you turn that mirror around and it then becomes your opportunity to do that.

Uh, You just kind of step back and say, okay, do I, do I have it? Can I do that? Is this the right direction? So there's sometimes a little bit of that trepidation. Um, one of my mentors years ago, um, used to just kind of give me some feedback, which is, as a true, good mentor, should, you know that that was sometimes my biggest hurdle, is that believing that I could.

Wow. Yeah. Excellent. Which was powerful. Yeah,

Don Sherman: very much so. How do you deal with adversity? When you have to make hard [00:12:00] decisions.

Amy Williams: It's funny being a de and I practitioner, um, there's never a shortage in terms of, uh, courageous conversations that often need to be had around teachable moments, helping people increase their awareness around gaps or opportunities.

Some of those very personal, some of those are just by nature of the business. And so those conversations are often happening with people that are. Way more important than me. And so, okay. You know, always, you know, sometimes telling the emperor that they have no clothes is, is, is not an easy task. And, and really, although some of that has to be a little bit delicate, you, you can't just go blast that from the rafters and giving, you know, that type of feedback.

However, um, you know, very, you know, direct in the right time, uh, has always been very, uh, helpful for me or beneficial in terms of, and just being very, um, Put yourself out there trusting and, and honest with the, the feedback.

Don Sherman: How [00:13:00] would you define courage from a leadership perspective?

Amy Williams: You know, it's that willingness to, to do the right thing when no one's looking.

Which sounds so easy in theory, I just think, but such it's something that many of us, um, take for granted that just, that we think just happens. But I think when, when, uh, sometimes that. When things are at your disposal, or you have the power or the authority, or you know, you're influenced by certain things, some of that is easy to lose sight of.

Mm-hmm. And, you know, it's, it's paying attention. And I'll just put from my de and I lens to make sure that yeah, we're, we're being inclusive and we're opportunities and what's my role and responsibility to help make it, uh, better? Where do, where do I have the power to influence change? And it's those types of things that are, you know, To me are courageous.

Sometimes when you stand up in a, in a room full of your peers and be an ally or an advocate for someone that is missing from the room or someone who's not being heard, and to call that [00:14:00] out, um, I think is powerful.

Don Sherman: Excellent. How do you feel when you walk into a room and you're the only one that looks like you?

That's normal. I know, I know, I know.

Amy Williams: Um, you know, I, I, I, it used to bother me quite a bit in terms of just a comfortability, and maybe that goes into your self, you know, my whole self-confidence deal,

right, is that you're, you walk into a room and you don't. See, um, you know, many women, many women of color, and you just think, well, you feel a little invisible sometimes.

And so, um, even just, uh, not too long ago, one of my mentors and, you know, I, I know I'm old, but I still have mentors and people that I, you know, admire to admire and look for advice and, and, uh, you know, her thoughts were around being more visible, be taking up more space and, and not being afraid to own.

Mm-hmm. Uh, own that. And so, I think, yeah, it can be a little intimidating for anyone, but if we don't enter the room, then we're never gonna get anywhere. So we, we have to, we have to step [00:15:00] forward and be willing to, to go.

Don Sherman: I agree. I agree. I just wonder how you felt about that,

Amy Williams: because Yeah, I wish I could say, Hey, it doesn't phase me and I don't notice it.

Yeah. But that's, you know, it's never seems to be the case. Yeah. You said darn again. Right. I get it.

Don Sherman: Uh, someone, uh, was to ask you, what's your brand? How would you answer? What's the Amy Williams

Amy Williams: brand? You know, I'm, uh, a collaborator. Uh, you know, I think I love and get energy working with a variety of different people to solve or to head a specific, um, direction.

Uh, certainly, you know, I. Trustworthy, hardworking. That's a piece of who I am. But that goes overall into, you know, if you put me in a corner of a room and you get me a problem to solve by myself, I'm gonna, I'm gonna fester. But if I can, um, you know, meet with, talk to work with, um, a group of people that are different than me Exactly, um, you know, to get different ideas, thoughts, you know, then yeah, I'm willing to [00:16:00] jump in and roll up the sleeves and, and work hard on.

Whatever it is we're trying to accomplish. And so, um, I, I really love and get energy from that. Okay.

Don Sherman: Brace yourself. Uh oh. Do you have any insecurities as a leader? I.

Amy Williams: Um, my fingernails. See, see, I wish I buy my fingernails. You know what? That's an honest answer you asked, honest. I did. I did. Um, I did. You know, but it's funny because you, I, I do that and I just think, ah, I do it when I'm bored.

I do it when I'm deep in thought. Mm-hmm. And I'm just like, just knock it off. No wonder you get covid anyway. Um, it's not, but yeah, during a pandemic is not the time you wanna bite your fingernails. Right? Oh my God.

Don Sherman: There you go. Wow. Now your ti tell me your title one

Amy Williams: more time. Senior Manager, diversity, equity Inclusion, global Inclusion.

So you're not doing community relations anymore? Not anymore, yeah. Okay. So, um, you know, with everything going on in this, in our country in 2020 and really the heightened. Um, not only awareness, but heightened need in [00:17:00] terms of the focus on this work. Spirit has been on their de and I journey since, you know, for years, I would say close to when we became Spirit.

Mm-hmm. Because Boeing was already doing this work and certainly, um, Brian Black left a very strong foundation, uh, of this work. Um, but, uh, you know, as we move forward and, you know, we've went through a couple other leaders in between and, and given it. The progress we needed to make. Um, then yeah, just the heightened awareness and focus that we've, I've now moved over and shifted and left corporate affairs and now back with my HR brethren, uh, and, uh, fully focused on de and I.

Don Sherman: Excellent. Well, as I make noise, as we say, a radio bills, I was gonna call you outing bills. I know I'll, I'll call myself out, got pacing bills. I like to take a break, uh, hear from our sponsors, and we will be back shortly with the unseen journey of Amy Williams.

Amy Williams: Severe weather, it's hail, [00:18:00] wind, rain, or snow.

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Don Sherman: We are back with Amy Williams. She's telling her unseen journey.

Let's get into expectations. How do you manage expectations of

Amy Williams: others? It's interesting. Um, early on in my career there was, uh, I think often some communication opportunity from my end in my head. It might be clear on, um, what you wanted someone to do or what the thought was, but, um, not always clearly articulated.

And, and so certainly that was some, some learning growing up and, and, and through the ranks and, uh, some of the disconnect there. And [00:19:00] so whether it's with my team or with a business leader, It is really is sitting down together to come up with what are, what's realistic expectations in terms of whatever we're working towards, project goal, you name it.

And together we then identify, okay, who's gonna own what and, uh, take it and run from there.

Don Sherman: What do you do to, uh, Keep inspired, keep

Amy Williams: motivated. De and I work is hard work. Um, you know, it, it's work that, you know, as I said, sometimes doesn't feel, uh, very gratifying. You, there are days when you just wanna bang your head on the wall, and I don't mean that any, it's not, I think any special to, to spirit or any other, I've done this work at other employers, other industries.

Um, but it's that awareness piece of, you know, the continuous. Moving people, uh, forward on their, on their journey in this space. And, and so sometimes it feels a little, if I have to one more time, explain this or what about that or, um, it's tough and you see certainly people, um, you lose good people, good [00:20:00] talent, uh, for silly reasons.

And so when I think about what inspires me or, you know, getting into this work overall, it is exactly that. You know, when I, when I look at. Uh, people in the work environment who are very talented and can contribute so much, yet it goes untapped or, or, you know, we don't engage those folks to give us their thoughts and their ideas and, and again, they become invisible.

And so it's those moments when you see, um, the light bulbs click. It's those moments where you see, um, People, uh, becoming, uh, fully engaged or that awareness grow and the change starts to happen that really keep you going and doing this work. It's important work. And, and I think, you know, yes, someone needs to do it and focus on it, but, uh, it's when you see the talent, um, and the organization move forward in terms of its inclusion are certain leaders, uh, very valuable.

And, and it just, it, it drives the reason to keep [00:21:00] doing this stuff. Let's unpack that

Don Sherman: a little bit. How long did it take you to decide you wanted to do d e? I ha.

Amy Williams: That's a good, good question. It was begrudgingly, you know, so when I was at Cargill, I, in a very junior and I started with them doing, um, recruiting and I had, uh, redid their college recruiting process for the, you know, meet platform and, um, was doing some experienced recruiting and by, you know, I had.

Did recruiting at another gig and I had had my fill of recruiting and so I was talking to my leader about, okay, so what, what's next? What else can I do? You know, I'm an HR major and um, I. I thought maybe somewhere in the I and d department or, or do something different. And Cargill's a huge organization.

Mm-hmm. So lots of opportunity and he said, well, before you start looking there, you know, we're looking at, um, you know, creating a new role around de and i and we think you'd be a great fit. And I, and at that point they had just really started in [00:22:00] Wichita on their journey. And I just was like, Ugh, I'm not sure if I want this.

And, and it was that, you know, being very junior, um, you, you're just like, well, why are they

gonna listen to me? Uh, I'm young, I'm a person of color, I'm a woman, I'm all these things, right? And you just wonder, you know, well, they're gonna look at me and think, well, of course, of course it matters. To her. She, she, you know, um, oh, good point.

Yeah. And so there was that apprehension and, and maybe that's, as I said, very junior in my career, uh, that, that self-confidence piece, that's where, you know, will they listen, will, you know, will I have the influence needed? And I think at any leadership role, um, you know, really influence is key and people have to be able to go along on the journey with you.

Mm-hmm. And so, You know, um, I guess luckily, yeah, I took the, took the step forward and, and took on the role, but it, and it stuck with me. I mean, as I said, it, it resonates with who I am. There are sometimes that I think, yeah, I was probably born to do this work. Right? Right. As much as sometimes I feel [00:23:00] like, you know, yeah, you, you gotta do the dance and, and, um, bring people along.

Um, that's a piece of it. And, and it's a, it's a skill. I think that not everyone. Can do, but it is something that I'm uniquely situated to do. Growing up, you know, biracial growing up, um, you know, certain generation, it just gives you a different appreciation and you can see life from different lenses. I always joke that not many people could, um, go to a fiesta one day and then a Baptist revival the next day and, and, and see the different lenses, the different worlds.

And for me, That's just a part of my norm. Nice. And, and so helping people see other worlds is kind of what I do.

Don Sherman: Excellence. But you're doing it on a, you're doing it on a global scale. You know, you're not like doing it with, I mean, how do you do that? I take it you got folks in different regions of the.

World helping you make this spot,

Amy Williams: right? Oh, you name it, you name that. And then you think about, you know, the world of those that are differently [00:24:00] abled. Um, I mean, there's just so many things, L G B T Q mm-hmm. And, um, different voices that can be brought forward and, and brought to the table in terms of different perspectives where people have traditionally been underrepresented, um, in our communities and, and.

So when I think about it from a global perspective, I always talk about there's ACEC continuum of where we are on our de and I journeys. And it ne it's not a good or bad right or wrong place, it's just, you know, you may grow up where every, you're just not exposed to a lot of difference and maybe you're not naturally attracted to difference.

And so therefore, you know, you grew up with a, a very, you know, um, sheltered view in terms of, you know, everyone looks like you, everyone's similar religion as you. Similar generations you're hanging out with, right. You know, all the sameness. Right. And so that's really that

awareness where you're, um, subconsciously kind of incompetent.

You don't know what you don't know. And, and then as you, you know, we, we go to college, we go to, you get in your work environments, you're around more and more different people. You know, you may [00:25:00] travel a bit. You start to become what I call, um, consciously incompetent. You're more on that kind of the action piece.

You're growing your awareness, you're learning. And then really the goal is, is the integration piece. And, and really, and, and where that gets to from a personal perspective is that it's embedded into who you are, um, how you go about your day-to-day from a company perspective. It's embedded into your, into all of your work environment, your processes, all those things.

Uh, integration is really the, the goal. But at the same time, I would say integration is almost like that goal that you'd never quite get to because you, you mentioned the global piece and. Yes, on a US level, from many aspects, I would say I'm integrated, but on a global perspective, there is still a huge opportunity for learning, um, and an awareness for myself.

And so that's kind of as part of the beauty of this work is that even as I sit and eat, live and breathe this stuff every day, there's still [00:26:00] always room for me to grow and learn a different perspective. And that. You know, I'm human too. And so, you know, when we talk about de and I work often, we talk about ha being willing to get out of your comfort zone and being willing to, um, you know, that you're gonna step into it sometimes.

Mm-hmm. And you're gonna get into the mucky conversations. I do that as well, you know, and, and have been, uh, given feedback on certain things where maybe I've missed. Um, an opportunity or where I've said something that hit someone in a, in a wrong way. Right. And so, yes. Yes. Um, I have to be willing to hold up the mirror and recognize that, um, what I'm saying, what I'm doing also has that opportunity to learn and grow versus someone else.

And so I mentioned our new acquisition, um, but like, so Northern Ireland, yeah. Make sure, you gotta say Northern Ireland, it's not just a part of Ireland. Oh wow. Okay. Yes. And then, so there's always this continuous learning. That's the cool thing I think that I love about this work is that you can, um, there's different aspects and what de and [00:27:00] I means to different parts of the, the regions, the world.

Um, there's always a, a new aspect. Excellent.

Don Sherman: With what's going on in the world today, far as heightened awareness of. In equity and this, that and the other. Is that easier for you to do your job or No. Or not.

Amy Williams: Mm-hmm. You know, I would say that today, and that's some of the things that is a little disheartening, you know, where I say this work is hard work and, and more so today, I feel like the polarization of where we are as a country, and I'm talking more US specific.

Right. Exactly. And it's so often, um, we quickly wanna go political. We quickly, and there's differences in, and I, and like I joked at work, you know, this past political season, uh, uh, in terms of, you know, presidential elections, I'll say we value our Republican employees just as much as we value our Democrat employees.

Nice. And we need them all to come to work Correct. And be engaged and work hard and, you know, all, and, and come to this common understanding of respect, uh, [00:28:00] across the board. So when I think about where the world is today, just this unwillingness sometimes to come to the table and have the conversation, um, we, I wouldn't be valuing diversity if.

I wasn't willing to sit at the table and necessarily have an open conversation with someone who didn't agree or didn't have my same values. Um, I, the goal is not necessarily that we all think the same or that we all head down the same path in, in this work. Um, the goal is that we all at least have a conversation about it exactly and are willing to at least look at what, you know, what does the greater good look like, um, for us, and how do we together work at making that happen.

Excellent. Um, but it's a balance. It's a balance. 'cause it, it gets very personal, very quick and people, um, want to, you know, if, if I, if you, if you call something out or if something's in a, a disagreement with them, often the feeling is that, you know, you're telling me I'm wrong, right? Or I'm right and you're wrong.

And there's, it's not that, it's just, it's different points of view, [00:29:00] different perspectives. Um, But it's, it's a challenge. Yeah. I, yeah. Yeah. And you, and there is, you know, okay. And I will also say, go ahead in all candidacy. 'cause there is that little, there are some behaviors and expectations and things that are just flat out unacceptable mm-hmm.

In our work environments. Mm-hmm. And even in our greater communities that we just can't have. Right. Um, and, and so I don't wanna. Make it to lala, you know, rosy. Mm-hmm. Glasses or, you know, but, so there are some things that yes, we need to have some hard parameters around. Right. And, and you know,

Don Sherman: so I thought the key word you hit was polarization.

I mean, that's, that's like on steroids. Very much polarization. Very much. Thank you for that. What community asset has been helpful in your leadership development? A program, an organization.

Amy Williams: I'm gonna go old school, Uhhuh and I, it's, it's actually, it's a sadness or a miss for Wichita 'cause we don't have it anymore.

Okay. So, as I said, I, I moved away for about 10 years, but before I moved and when I was entering into this work, I. [00:30:00] I, um, had the, the privilege of being a part of diversity Kansas, which was formally national or N C C J. So X, yeah. Okay. Okay. Yes, there. And for

those that don't know N C C J, it was a, a civil rights organization that started, gosh, I think clear back in the fifties and it used to be called National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Right. And then somewhere in like the eighties, I think they changed, and don't quote me on these timeline, but they changed their, their name to national conference mm-hmm. Of community and justice. Yeah, they did. And then, so we had a Wichita Cha, we had a Wichita chapter or organization, and then, um, they left N C C J and they became their own.

It was ran by Sue Sue Castile. Yes. Uh, makes your rest in P Peace. Great leader in our community. Yes, yes, yes. Um, gone too soon. Yeah. Um, but she, she helped stand diversity Kansas up and so as a company doing this work in Wichita many moons ago, um, we partner with them doing some really good work.

That's [00:31:00] how I actually got to know Brian Black back then. He was at the Urban League and, and Right. Doing work with them there. And, uh, diversity. Kansas had a youth leadership institute where I was, what a quote unquote voluntold mm-hmm. To go, uh, volunteer for a week. And it was funny when I was told, I was just like, I don't even like kids, let alone high school once and you're making me go live with them for a week at Butler.

You know, we, we did it that on Butler campus, Uhhuh, but you know, it actually ended up being. Some of the most rewarding work I've ever done, um, where, you know, kids are just that much more open and malleable. I mean, at the same time, they're not afraid to give you your, their, give you their thoughts and opinions and ideas about things.

And so working with them throughout a week, putting them through, um, lots of different scenarios to challenge their thoughts and their perspectives in the world that they thought they knew. Um, and to see the light bulb. Click and to see how, you know, hopefully it's those things that inspire you to create, that you're creating change for the greater [00:32:00] good.

Um, that as they go out into the world, what are they gonna then go to and be more aware of and, and be allies and advocates for. And so, um, that was very, uh, empowering, very rewarding. Um, so yes, did some of that work internally to the organization I was with as well, but mm-hmm. Um, It's sad that does say that our organization no longer exists for, for in Wichita, but I do think that we have, um, aspects, uh, of that, that are coming to the surface in terms of some of that work.

Do you

Don Sherman: think it could. Start up again

Amy Williams: with the right leader. I do, I do. And I, it's interesting, this, this work is so cyclical. Mm-hmm. Um, you know, I've often had leaders ask me, well, you know, when do we think we'll get there? Um, or I've heard people refer to it as a marathon, and believe it or not, back in the

day, I've ransomed marathons.

And even marathons have ends, right? Correct. I mean, they, they come to an end at 26.2 miles. Right. And so, but [00:33:00] I really don't. I'm of the philosophy, and maybe you just wanna call it the, you know, job security. I'm looking for job security, but Right. No, it doesn't end. Uh, you know, we're human. And the moment that we stop paying attention to these things, the moment that we think we have it, um, is when something else comes up.

And that we need to pay attention to or need to take another look at. And so, or to make sure that we're not slipping and backtracking when I think about the civil rights movements or other movements in our country even, um, and where we are today, uh, there's still progress to be made. Mm-hmm. And so it's a continuous effort.

Have

Don Sherman: to ask this question. As a female leader, where have you faced resistance? And the professional world

Amy Williams: I, there, there's a piece of me that would like to believe that that has never happened. And I would say blatantly, I can't tell you that I've felt it. Okay. But at the same time, I'm also the person that [00:34:00] looks at the numbers in organizations and see where the opportunities are.

And so there are times when I don't feel like, uh, you know, yeah, I've, I've been heard, or, or maybe, you know, you have an opportunity to do, um, something and you're not given that fair chance. Again, don't know that that's ever for fact happened, but. Sometimes you wonder. Mm-hmm. Um, I've had the privilege of having some very strong female role models.

Debbie, again. There you go. Yep. Yep. Yes, I came, that's, I say it's her fault. I'm back to Wichita. I came back to work for her and, and I didn't know her very well then, but yes, very strong. Uh, You know, female leaders that have helped, I feel like pave the path. Yeah. To say that if you want it, you can go, you can go get it.

Um, yes. So Excellent. Debbie is so, so cool. Yes. Agreed. Agreed. I'm a huge fan. Oh, another

Don Sherman: fan. Okay. Let's talk about your biography. What would the title of the book be, and who would play you in the movie?

Amy Williams: [00:35:00] Uh, that, you know, you threw me for a loop. The name of my biography would be, um, hot mess. No, I feel like I'm always running around a bit of a hot mess.

Is

Don Sherman: that what an exclamation point or not? Yes.

Amy Williams: And I'm gonna give it to, that's nice. Um, and I always say I'm, I'm, I'm her chunky older sister. Um, what's the girl on, uh, And now her name escapes me. She's in the Fast and Furious and she's um, oh, Michelle Rodriguez. Her. Yes. Yeah. I've had a few people and I, as it says, sometimes it's like, yeah, we all look alike.

The say that I look like her, so, but she's, I, yeah. Maybe if I lost about a hundred pounds and, you know, you know, 10 years younger. I think that's Michelle Rodriguez? Yes. I think so. Maybe. Okay. Something like that. I'll pick her just 'cause let's pick her. Yeah. You know, there you go.

Don Sherman: She. She's cool.

Amy Williams: She is cool.

And she says what's on her mind. I appreciate that. Yes, she does. I appreciate that it says that

Don Sherman: scripted or did that just [00:36:00] come roll out? Excellent. Well, we appreciate you being on the show today. Got a little fun thing for you, a little word association. You just, I give you one word, you gimme one back.

It's not wrong 'cause it's your word. Right. Okay. Excellent. Leader

Amy Williams: Martin Luther King Failure. Try again. Success, happiness, the chamber connector.

Don Sherman: I know you're back, but Wichita, home Vacation. Global

Amy Williams: Hero. My mother, family. They're like a warm blanket. Fun, uh, travel.

Don Sherman: Last but not least, Beverage.

Amy Williams: Two words, old fashioned.

Oh, nice,

Don Sherman: nice, nice. Well, we truly appreciate you being on the [00:37:00] show, Amy. Like I said, you already know I'm a fan, I'm a disciple. I'm whatever

Amy Williams: you wanna call me. Dito, sir. Dito, I'm not where I feel, you know, you're the one being honored in the, I'm just, I'm just honored to be on the other side of the table.

Here we go. I appreciate it. Go. Here we go.

Don Sherman: Well, that's our show for today. Thank you, Amy, for telling us your unseen

journey. Exclusively here on the WCBA. Friends, we drop a new episode every Wednesday morning, so don't forget to like us, love us, share us. So until next time, peace.

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