



Dear Friends,

We just finished the 2022-23 academic year, and I am excited to report that less than a month ago, the first group of students graduated with a major in Entrepreneurship. While our goal is not to encourage every student to pursue a major in Entrepreneurship, we strive to expose as many students as possible to an entrepreneurial mindset and behavior through our curricular and co-curricular programming.

As our lives will soon be significantly affected by new developments in the area of Artificial Intelligence (AI), enhancing students' ability to think and act entrepreneurially will become even more relevant and necessary. It is exceedingly important and timely to enhance our students' ability to utilize AI to find problems that AI can't find, design creative solutions that AI can't design, and put those solutions into action in a way that AI can't.



During the summer months, we will be planning for our 2023-24 co-curricular and experiential events and activities. We will also evaluate and update our curriculum. This process might involve revisions of existing courses and the creation of new courses. Specifically, we are looking for ways to include exercises and assignments that allow students to use Chat GPT or similar AI programs to conduct research and evaluate ideas. We are also looking for the most effective way to use the Big Blue Thrift Store on campus as a laboratory in which students practice the skills they develop in their specific areas of interest and study, including but not limited to Accounting, Communication, Marketing, English, Art, Computer Science, Graphic Design, and Entrepreneurship.

In this issue of *Make it Happen*, besides updating you on events and activities since our last issue, we have also included articles written by two Marietta College alums who also serve as mentors in our program, Julie Jeffries and Julie Wilkes. Julie and Julie's articles are in response to the following prompt: Share your entrepreneurial journey after Marietta College and lessons you learned along the way. Please email us at [entr@marietta.edu](mailto:entr@marietta.edu), if you are interested in joining our program as a mentor or would like to share your entrepreneurial journey in this publication.

Go Pios!

Jacqueline Khorassani, Ph.D.

Entrepreneurship Program Director

Marietta College

## Six Lessons I Have Learned During My Entrepreneurial Journey

**By: Julie Jeffries. MC '93**

When I was asked to share my story as an entrepreneur, I was reluctant. What can I tell you that readers of an entrepreneurial magazine have not heard before? Why is my story so interesting? I am old, and frankly, by the numbers, not necessarily that successful.

I started my article about five times and stopped. I made excuses as to why I could not provide my long-time mentor and friend with the article. I even asked AI to write the article for me (pretty funny article that would have been fantastic ... if only it were true!). But, then it hit me that I just had to write about what I have learned along my journey because that is the part of the story that is truly unique to me and that I think a reader can be inspired by because--quite frankly--being an entrepreneur is not for the faint at heart and it can be downright hard and lonely.



I didn't start out thinking I would be an entrepreneur... I mean, let's get real, autocorrect still has to spell the damn word for me. But, when I look back on my career, I can tell you that I am an entrepreneur and have been since Day 1, which for me happened to be in a huge multinational company in a job that I told my hiring boss that I was not qualified to do.

His advice (and **Lesson #1**): STOP THINKING YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED AND FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND. NO ONE IS ACTUALLY QUALIFIED WHEN YOU ARE INVENTING SOMETHING NEW, BUT YOUR ATTITUDE WILL MAKE OR BREAK THE MISSION. There were four of us on this team. I was scared, but I took his advice and ran with it. We developed what would become the world's first recognized and prize-winning "Intranet" to organize the multinational's intellectual capital, cutting sales time and client-service time dramatically by reusing information. Was it my idea? No. Was my attitude part of our success? YES! Was it entrepreneurial? ABSOLUTELY in every sense of the word.

I went on to earn my MBA from an awe-inspiring institution that I still can't believe I had the privilege to attend. The institution had some pretty advanced studies for entrepreneurs, but I wasn't into that... because I wasn't an entrepreneur, remember? I focused my studies on international business and corporate strategy. I thought I wanted to continue my career in information management... it was exciting and interesting to me, and I was clearly good at it. So, instead of finding an opportunity in a major company that would hire me after my MBA, I decided to look at my summer internship as an opportunity to find an experience so unique that I would never have a chance to do it again.

**Lesson #2:** DON'T LOOK AT YOUR CAREER AS A PATH. LOOK AT YOUR CAREER AS LIFE-LONG LEARNING AND LET YOUR PASSIONS DRIVE YOU. I went to South Africa and alongside a team of incredibly interesting people, we developed a social investment strategy for a global car manufacturer that was successfully implemented and later replicated in other developing nations. We figured out how to manipulate an academic program used in the US to enrich the education of highly gifted learners and rework that program to address gaps in education between highly privileged and underprivileged schools in a developing nation.

A few jobs later, I found myself in a new company labeled as a start-up. I was external hire #1 to this company – fully funded by a major multinational. This meant that there was money available to do really cool stuff...and for me to earn a nice salary. Doesn't sound very entrepreneurial and adventurous, right? Well, I had bills to pay (fancy MBA, remember??).

**Lesson #3:** SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO BE RESPONSIBLE AND YOU HAVE TO EARN A LIVING. ALWAYS RESPECT YOUR FINANCIAL SITUATION AND ALWAYS SAVE WHEN YOU CAN. Let me tell you...it was a start-up in every sense of the word. We had a pretty face in front of our clients, but in the background, I was under the desks hooking up wires, cleaning messes up in the kitchen, answering phone calls, creating sales and marketing strategies, writing proposals, meeting with clients, and managing the relationship with our #1 Beta Client. I worked 12-15 hours a day on average. I was paying off my school debt while also learning incredibly important things about running a business without even realizing it. We sold that company to our investors and were rewarded nicely. I think that was the first time that I officially considered myself a part of the entrepreneurial world.

Then, life happened. It usually does catch up with you. No one seems to be immune. I was married and while transitioning as an executive in one multinational and looking for a new corporate exec role years later while living in Venezuela, I found out I was expecting my first baby. My world changed instantly in so many ways that there isn't enough computer memory available to write down all my thoughts. But, for purposes of this story, I suddenly was no longer a candidate for my executive career path because the laws in Venezuela are not the same as in the US. No one would hire me pregnant. I felt like I had walked off a cliff.

**Lesson #4:** NEVER STOP NETWORKING AND MAINTAIN PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH EVERYONE. Remember that your mom always said, "be nice because you never know when you might meet again"? Solid advice, Mom. Solid. Long story short, I ended up as the right-hand to the CEO of a start up in Europe, who was the most unlikely of candidates for me to work for. My new boss was an old business associate who had once told me in a fit of anger that I was "nothing but a glorified secretary". Sometimes we all have a bad day and my choice to ignore his comment in that moment led to an incredible business partnership that has lasted decades since. And, guess what? I was back in the work game.

Over time, my family grew, and we moved to another country. I again found myself out of work and decided to take a class at the local community college because it looked like fun. One class turned into several and soon I finished with a certification in interior design and decorating and – much to my surprise – was told that I could now work in the field.

**Lesson #5:** KEEP LEARNING. AN EDUCATION WILL NEVER FAIL YOU, BE IT AN OFFICIAL DEGREE, ON-THE-JOB TRAINING OR FROM THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS. This little "mom time" turned into a new company, which later turned into a second, larger company for me and my husband.

While working on building that company and raising my family, "life" got in the way again (do you see a pattern here?). I was

diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor that left me blind in one eye and just a few months later, I was hit with a diagnosis of breast cancer.

**Lesson #6:** TURN LEMONS INTO LEMONADE. YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE YOUR NEXT IDEA AND OPPORTUNITY WILL COME FROM. You can read my whole story later if you are interested in my latest venture, which quite frankly has been through its ups and downs financially. It's not making me millions and I am far from a household name ... except in the houses of my clients. But, that is OK. I took a personal situation that went to all new depths on the scale of bad to worse and turned it into a social mission and venture for me. At the end of the day, I am relevant because I am making other people's lives better. I am doing everything that I set out to do in my life. I am changing the world, one bite at a time.

The bottom line is to share with you my secrets for attitude, resilience, and perseverance because that is absolutely the essence of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial opportunities can be found in many unlikely places. Your success will depend on your ability to flex and flow with the good and bad tides that you will encounter, to keep your humor and never take yourself too seriously, to find people who continually inspire you, and to define what success means to you. Now, go out there, have fun, make some money, and change the world.

*Julie Jeffries is the Founder/CEO of Not Your Momma's Vegetables, a dynamic clean-living company dedicated to empowering individuals and businesses in optimizing their personal health and workforce health through a wide range of innovative products and services designed to enhance overall well-being. She boasts an impressive educational background, with a BA in Political Science from Marietta College (OH) and an MBA from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). Additionally, Julie has acquired valuable expertise in various domains, holding certifications in Interior Design and Decorating from Dade College (FL), Plant-based Nutrition from eCornell (NY), as well as Brain Health and Coaching from Amen University. Currently, she is pursuing a certification in Public Health and Sustainability from the University of Michigan. To stay updated on her latest endeavors, you can follow Julie on Instagram at @notyourmommamasvegetables or visit her website at <http://www.nymv.org>.*



Julie Jeffries, Founder/CEO  
[Not Your Momma's Vegetables](http://www.nymv.org)

## I WAS GIVEN THE GIFT AT A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE, BUT A GIFT IS ONLY AS GOOD AS WHAT YOU DO WITH IT.

**By: Julie Wilkes MC '98**

The summer before coming to Marietta, my heart stopped for the second time in my life. I had undergone a low-risk procedure, and had a complication that results in a heart attack. When I awoke, my mother said that it was a miracle that I was alive. This was a carbon copy of the day I was born; the doctors said I would not make it. When I did, the word miracle is what was written in my charts.

I set out for Marietta, an insecure 18-year-old girl who had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Doctors had always said I wouldn't live long. First saying I would die at birth, then 13, 20, 24, 30, and 40 years old. I always knew I had a short amount of time to do something in my life, but it wasn't until I got to Marietta that I figure out what to do with it.

Marietta taught me my voice and showed me my purpose; that I was an advocate for overcoming obstacles. Marietta also showed me that I naturally was attracted to culture, people, and learning about others. Choosing to be an International Business major was one of the best decisions I have made; I knew that no matter what I did, having an appreciation for cultures, people, connecting with others, and the world as a whole would be valuable. Traveling to China to teach English for my international course credit, I learned to develop resiliency in new places.

When I graduated Marietta, I knew I needed to combine my passion for helping people overcome challenges, appreciating health, understanding people and culture, and blend it into my life's work.

For the last 25 years, I have been able to do just that. First starting as a consultant at Accenture (Andersen Consulting at the time), I quickly became an intrapreneur, recognizing the need for better work/life balance and focus on wellbeing. Three years into the company, I wrote the CEO and asked if I could start a focus on wellbeing. The CEO did not say yes; but they also did not say no. So, I worked on grassroots programs and achieved my masters in a focus of workforce wellbeing. I spent 7 years developing programs on my own time, hopeful the programs could eventually open a door for a position. In 2010, I was offered to take my grassroots work and turn it into my official career at Accenture and have spent the last 15 years growing a sophisticated wellbeing program. I first started with US employees, grew to Canada and now sit on our global team, where we design wellbeing for over 715,000 employees and their families. It is a dream come true and a sense of paying forward on the gift of a second chance at life.

Outside of Accenture, I felt a strong sense to take the same energy that I used internally at Accenture, and impact my community. I wrote a book and started professionally speaking. My messages were always about health, wellbeing and how we can heal ourselves



from almost any obstacle when we take care of ourselves. This opened a door for me to then apply for a business plan writing contest, of which I won first place. The winning prize received a brick-and-mortar shop, rent-free for a year. I opened the doors to my wellbeing center and named it Seven Studios, after my book, "The Seven Life Miracles".

The term seven captures seven lessons I've learned in my life that have profoundly impacted my ability to overcome any obstacle and live my dream life.

While this journey has been a blessing, it hasn't come without some sidesteps. As any entrepreneur will tell you, for every success, I had two other failures, but the difference between myself and someone whose business didn't make it, was the focus on accepting the failures and continuing to find the next best step. When my studio was popular, many people came up to me asking me to open additional locations. I opened a location 10 miles from the first one, and it failed within 6 months. I know why it failed and learned from it. And I was humbled when I closed those doors and walked away. This was part of the journey I had to have to ultimately be successful. I continued and grew the studio to incredible levels of performance.

*"You can't let a failure get in the way of your dream; but a failure will teach you if you want the dream enough- because if you don't, you'll let it go."*

And then, COVID hit. We were not only mandated to close, but we were also severely vandalized and forced to put up wooden planks across our entire space for 8 months. This broke my heart and was a moment I questioned if I should keep believing in this dream. My heart told me it was important to overcome, and a part of the lesson I needed to learn. I hired local artists to paint my wooden boards, and it became a beautiful place for me to visit while we waited on supplies to come in to rebuild our space.

I decided that while we waited to rebuild, I could take some of the retail products we had created and sell them to supplement our losses. We opened up two retail stores at local fashion malls. Opening self-care retail stores in high-fashion malls that compete with known brands such as Bath & Body Works during a pandemic wasn't the easiest business model to navigate. But I did.

In January of 2022, I owned several retail stores and was planning to reopen my fitness/yoga studio, when I had the offer to relocate to a beautiful building near my home. The work/life balance of a smaller commute, the supportive community and the opportunity to bring my wellbeing concept to a new location as a fresh start was appealing to me. I chose to close all my other locations, and make this new and fresh opportunity my focal point.

And it has paid off. The new space offered me a chance to hit a reset button. And, we have created a fitness and yoga studio that fills its classes and creates a sense of belonging for hundreds of people weekly. It has truly been one of the greatest accomplishments of my career.

But, I share the failures with you, because I think it is important for an entrepreneur to always talk about both – the successes and the failures. You can't let a failure get in the way of your dream; but a failure will teach you if you want the dream enough--because if you don't, you'll let it go.

Marietta's lessons of culture, connection, people, business, resiliency and kindness have been the foundation to my decisions and ultimately, led me to my successes. I am so grateful for my journey, and as I am about to graduate with my PhD in Organizational Psychology, you can bet the best is still yet to come.

Remember that we all have a journey, a story and a gift. Gifts are only as good as what you do with them, so play big, fail forward and get back up and stay true to your passion and sense of purpose. It will not steer you wrong.

*Julie Wilkes is the Global Well-being Senior Manager at Accenture. She is also the owner of Seven Studios, a life coach, yoga and meditation instructor, author & motivational speaker.*



Julie Wilkes

Senior Manager at [Accenture](#)

Owner of [Seven Studios](#)



## Spring 2023 Entrepreneurship Events at Marietta College

### March 2, 2023: PioPitch: Empowering Citizens to Live in the Communities of Their Choice

In the March 2, 2023 session of PioPitch, over sixty Marietta College students, faculty, alumni, and other members of the community provided their input on how to find new employees for agencies that help the aging, disabled, or chronically ill population to live a fulfilling life in their familiar environments. Presenters were: Barry Backus, Shelby Rhodes and Liz Ford



**Liz Ford**  
Recruitment and Engagement  
Specialist, Public Consulting  
Group



**Barry Backus**  
Community Outreach  
Coordinator, Washington  
County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities



**Shelby Rhodes**  
Executive Director,  
HAVAR, Inc.

[Learn more](#)

### April 13, 2023: Junior PioBiz

On Thursday, April 13, 2023, students from Belpre High School, Fort Frye High School, Marietta High School, plus one home-schooled student, presented nine business ideas during the Junior PioBiz Competition at The Gathering Place at Marietta College.



Pictured above: Junior PioBiz competitors and judges.



The winners from left to right: First Place, Sophia Parlin '26, home-schooled, for Grab-a-Gig; Second Place, Avery Varner '25, Allison Mullins '25, Katie Woodford '24, from Belpre High School for MED B; Third Place, Jacob Ferrier '23 and Javier Cancio '23 from Belpre High School for Squaretila; Fourth Place, Evan Masselli '24 and Caleb Caldwell '24 from Marietta High School for Summer Breeze; Fifth Place, Blake Church '24 and Luke Coyner '24 from Belpre High School for The Phoenix Mat.

[Learn more](#)

## April 20, 2023: PioBiz Competition Round 3 Business Plan

On April 20, 2023, the final round of PioBiz Competition was held on the campus of Marietta College. This round of the competition consisted of submitting and presenting a fully developed business plan.



Pictured above from left to right:

1. Gavin Ott, the first place (\$1,750.00) award winner. Gavin majores in Management, and his business is *740 Pressure Washing*.
2. Three competition judges Tres Ross and Michael Bond, John Martin.
3. Rylie Wahl, the second place (\$1,250.00) award winner. Rylie is a graduate student majoring in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and her business is *Jovial*.
4. The fourth Competition judge Mike Workman.

[Learn more](#)

## April 27, 2023: End of the Year Award Ceremony

On Thursday, April 27, 2023, The Entrepreneurship Program at Marietta College held its end of the year award ceremony. Besides the college students and their families, several College staff and faculty also participated in the event. This event also hosted several members of the Program's advisory board members and mentors. In addition, several high school students who had won the Junior PioBiz award earlier this month also attended this ceremony along with their parents and siblings. During the ceremony, President William Ruud presented the award certificates to the winners of Round 2 and Round 3 of PioBiz Competition, PioSlove Hackathon, and Junior PioBiz competition. The first group of graduating seniors majoring in Entrepreneurship were also acknowledged during this ceremony.



Pictured above from left to right, President Bill Ruud with the members of the first graduating class majoring in Entrepreneurship: Maddy Jones, Bastian Gehr, Haylee Mott, Alison Loase, and Allison Barnes.

## UPCOMING EVENT



***Join us on October 2, 2023  
on the campus of Marietta College  
for the second annual BIG Workshop***

[Learn more](#)

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It is, in part, due to the generosity of our sponsors that we can offer our cocurricular and extracurricular events and activities to the community either free of charge or at a discount. We do this because our goal is to build a network of young and seasoned entrepreneurs that together create economic, social, and environmental values through collaboration and cooperation. [Read More.](#)

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