

**Ep #152: The Statistics Are Not Your Future
with Marci Fehlhafer**



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Leah Badertscher

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I had such a dilemma – a really good dilemma – when preparing the intro of this episode for you this week. Because this week, my friends, I have such an amazing guest for you. And she has a wealth of wisdom and energy to share. And so, my conundrum was, what story do I pull from for the clip at the beginning?

Is it one that speaks to the importance of creativity in leadership? Or to the power of embracing and owning creativity, even and especially when you've never identified that way? Or how to know when to let go of plans and goals and allow the bigger dreams in life that want to unfold for you?

Is it the life-saving, life-giving importance of laughter, joy, enthusiasm, passion? Or do I include a story where this guest talks about, with such conviction, how everyone needs a champion and how having a tribe to support you in incredibly difficult times, but throughout all of life, is something that everyone deserves?

In the end though, I chose the story that I did because I know that today's guest, if I could bottle up her essence, her spirit, her mindset, her enthusiasm, slap a label on the front that says, "Capital C Creative, magic, and miracles, here's how you do it," label on the front, I would send that out to all of you.

And in a way, I am because I truly believe in learning from people, not only their words and their experiences – and you'll have that here, so take plenty of notes. I did when I listened back through it. It's also an energetic learning. It's allowing yourself to be changed by the presence of another, which I believe can happen through the airwaves.

And so, with this particular story that I am sharing from Marci Fehlhafer, who I will give you her full bio later, but suffice to say for now, she is an

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unconventional creative who loves to color outside the lines. And beautifully so. She is also the director of a nonprofit. She is a peer support specialist for other cancer survivors, and she is a beloved, amazing alum of the Art School and the Art School Mastermind.

She is also one of the most powerful manifesters I have ever met. And I think it's because the universe loves a big target. And Marci gives it a tremendous target with her big dreams, including her dreams for her community, herself, her family, her friends, others, and her tremendous spirit and heart.

Your dreams can't help but fly smack-dab into the center when you give it such a big bull's eye like Marci does. And it's so instructive, not only what she does, but who she is. And so, that's why this intro is a little bit longer and I wanted to save this clip for the end of the intro, so that you have the opportunity to hit the pause button when she finishes this story and really let it sink in.

Because for any of you out there listening who are looking to create something that may require you going against the odds, that may require you to leave behind your stories about what was possible in the past, for you and for others, and to instead open up the door to a new world and walk into a future that is so much brighter and bigger and fantastic and extraordinary and wonderful than maybe anything you've ever allowed yourself to dream or fathom before.

I hope you enjoy this story. I hope you enjoy this very special episode with Maci Fehlhafer.

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Marci: You know, everyone talks about that day when they get cancer. I can still see that day that my sister asked my oncologist, “How long do we have?” And I’ll never forget his response. He said, “Statistics say two to five years...” but he looked me in the eye and said that, “That is not your future.”

And I tell you what, of all that day – I mean, that day sucked real bad. But of all that day, I was like, “That’s not my future. I’m going to make a different – God has more plans for me.” And I clung to the Jeremiah 29:11, “God has a plan for my future. Like, this is my future, not statistically.”

And that comes from a numbers – I was a statistics girl. I was a, “Show me the bar graph.” I’ll never forget. He just looked me in the eye and he said, “That’s not your future.” And so, again, without that statement after that, I could have gotten stuck there. I could have been like, “Well, better live it up while I can because I’ve got two to five years.”

And I’m afraid that there are a lot of people that get stuck on those statistics. And I have built a really good relationship with my oncologist in that he points out, maybe five years ago those are where the statistics – but what medicine does in those five years, you can’t base your survival on old statistics.

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You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

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Welcome, everyone, to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. Speaking of things that I would love to bottle up and ship out to all of you, it's a beautiful morning here in Michigan, an absolutely gorgeous morning. And I'm looking forward to this conversation with you and again, so excited to share today's guest with you. Her energy, her life, her wisdom, her enthusiasm, her laugh, and also then I'm looking forward to celebrating by going for a run. I'm going to head to campus. It's a gameday weekend over at Notre Dame and I love just the energy, being amidst and among all that energy, weaving in and out.

And it's been such an incredible week. Our group sessions in the Art School were just fantastic. Such excellent questions, the dynamic, the chemistry of the group is extraordinary. I always love that I have this opportunity to work with people on what is so dear and what matters most to them in their lives. And that's always a gift. Through the ups and downs, through the difficulties and the celebrations.

And this also happens to be one of those weeks where the celebrations are pouring in. And not only from my current Art Schoolers, but from past alum, today's guest included. So, I don't know what's up right now, what the planets are doing. I don't know what it is. But there is definitely the energy of breakthrough.

And I also wanted to share that for those of you who are out there working on long-term goals. So, many of my clients have been experiencing milestone breakthroughs lately from intentions that they set three months ago, six months ago, a year ago, some of them two years ago.

So, I want to give a shoutout to one in particular, Kelly Darke, who posted on our Art School Facebook page about the sale of this epic piece of artwork. I adore her work. We'll include links in the show notes. It is not enough to

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say she is a fiber artist or multimedia artist. You have to see what she does, the abstracts that she weaves and works and creates. It's truly unlike anything else I have ever seen.

And this one piece in particular that she created in an earlier Art School session and it was inspired by the inner work she did in that session, it moves me to tears thinking about how beautiful this piece is. And that it also recently found a new home. So, shoutout to Kelly and the inner work that went into making that piece. And then also super high-five to the inner work that went into creating the sale and creating demand for her awesome work; the demand and attention that it deserves.

So, well done, Kelly. She really is an example of what's possible and of sticking with your intention, even and especially when you're not feeling it and staying in for the long haul and reminding yourself to take the long view about what you want your life and your career and also your own personal evolution, your creative evolution, but your evolution as a person.

It's so amazing. It's been so amazing to watch. And so, we are all cowbelling, as we do in the Art School, her success and everything, especially everything that led to it. Because once you do it once, it's like muscle memory. It's in you. You can do that again and again and again. It truly is a meta skill.

There is also a teaching point that I can pull from Kelly's own experience. Because she has shared that one thing that really helped her was even just recently when she was in our Affluent Artist Immersion, I had asked everyone to focus on and align with the energy of that which they want to create, of the future that they're headed to, the direction in which they are headed.

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Because when we create from that energy, when we tap into that, then that's what we create. And it does require a different way of being; mind, body, and spirit. So, there's more to it than that. But that is essentially the question that I asked and that she focused on. Like, what energy am I aligning with and how can I create from that?

And then we did a lot of coaching and we walked through specific skills and tools to use. And then there's the dynamic of the group. There's the container that I create. And then one of my jobs as the coach, as the facilitator is to hold that energy and to let other people steep in it, to create a space that offers not only the best tools, the best coaching, the best teaching of a skillset, because knowledge is very ubiquitous these days.

You can find knowledge so many different places. There are so many webinars you can Google. The secret sauce is in the energy. The secret sauce is in the heart and soul that you pour into it. And then being able to maintain that energy, that energetic level for the entire group, to let it change them and let them change and evolve and reach for that next level that they're trying to tap into.

And this is not fluff, folks. This is the difference between making it and making it big. This is the difference too, you'll hear it is not fluff when you hear Marci speak today about things that made a tremendous difference for her in her life, including through a very serious cancer diagnosis and journey.

It's not fluff when it comes down to your life. And she shares such a compelling story. And there are many takeaways. No matter where in life you are or what your goals and intention are, I know I do have listeners who are moving through situations and circumstances in their life that

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included diagnosis, that include illness, that include difficult divorces and life changes, transitions.

And I also know there are those of you who are reaching and you've been reaching for a long time and you've experienced a lot of failure and you are on the verge of giving up or you keep trying and you feel like, on the inside, maybe you're going through the motions of trying and giving up.

And so, I want this energetic infusion to not be lost on you, to give yourself that. Because too often, we think, "Well, I'm doing the right things. I know the right things. Then why is nothing changing?" And to really care for and be a guardian and a steward and pay great attention to your energy and to the energy with which you create.

And so, creating, for me, in creating the Art School and the mastermind, which I'm not currently running a mastermind, but I will be reopening later this year. And so, stay tuned for that. You can stay on my newsletter if you want to make sure you do not miss out on the news of that.

But I've been thinking about what are all the other ways too, where I can offer this space where people can come to where yes, you are inspired, and also you are in this energy where there is an expectation that you won't just inhale inspiration and then go about your day and nothing changes, but where you will take it in and you will allow yourself to be changed.

So, with each podcast episode, that's my intention, that wherever you are as you listen to this, that this is a place where I want to meet you in a very meaningful way and offer you a space in which to create meaningful change. You know, what really would make a difference, a profound difference in your life? And I'm thinking too of how you will carry that forward and then make a difference in the lives of others.

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So, I want to offer a suggestion as you listen to these podcasts, mine or anyone else's. If you're really listening to it to make a meaningful change in your life, that you just remind yourself of that, that there's power in that. Because I also hear so many people saying, "I just take things in but I never do anything." Stop telling yourself that.

When you listen to something like this, be like, this is something that I am using to move my life forward. This is something where I feel renewed, I feel energized. And then don't discount that. And then watch how it continues then to flow outward when you don't discount it. And as I always say with the coach with me, really take it in, appreciate that this is something you're doing for yourself. And then ask yourself, "How am I changing because of this? What am I doing differently? What different choices am I making?"

Because creativity is every bit as much about making the creative choice, taking responsibility, responding differently in our lives and seeing that, "Hey, I made a different choice today than I made in the past," and doing that over and over again. And to sustain change, that is what it takes, like having this awareness, reminding yourself of why you're doing what you're doing, and that it's working, even before it feels like it's working.

Stay the course. And so, again, I've been thinking about other ways I can do this. You know, I have the Art School, the mastermind, the podcast. I offer immersions at different times. And one thing that I've been working on is offering audio products or digital products, experiences that are at a much lower price point than perhaps an investment in live work with me, because I'm currently full for private coaching, but I also do offer private coaching.

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But this is a way that, at a lower price point, you can steep in the energy that supports your next greatest work, that supports your life in a deep and profound way, that supports your greatest creativity and the greatest vision you have for your life, the greatest expression that you imagine being possible for you.

Don't wait. Don't hold back. Don't hesitate. This is it, guys. This is it. So, give yourself what it is that nourishes you and then thank yourself for that. Don't berate yourself for that. Don't scold or discount that it's just you taking something in. Say, "No. Not only am I taking this in. I am taking it in thinking deeply, and then using it to change."

So, whether you find it through my work or whatever work you're drawn to, let yourself steep in the possibility of extraordinary opportunities and an extraordinary bright future for you, brighter than you can even imagine. Revel in the thought of you being someone who sets moonshot goals and achieves them, like you're a serial moonshot goal-setter and achiever, as Marci is.

So, she will rub off on you. Hang around Marci long enough, be in the proximity of Marci and people like her – and I'm using proximity loosely, like listening to a podcast can be proximity if you take that orientation. And let them expand you. Let them inspire you to think about what is possible for human potential when we fix our hearts and minds, our passion, and our love on an intentional direction and that we are caretakers, stewards, guardians, and we do not allow in anything that negates or interferes with that bright future, that vision, that next greatest version, that beautiful reality and life that we are moving towards and then experiencing too, allowing ourselves to experience in, to laugh in, again I keep wanting to use the word revel, and savor in the moment.

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And again, Marci is such a beautiful example of this. And she also is articulate. So, we have her words to learn from and that wisdom as well. So, without further ado, let me share a little bit from Marci's formal bio with you.

So, she's created a lot of different changes throughout her life, beginning with a story you will hear her tell from kindergarten about when she first decided she wasn't creative. And I have since disabused her of that notion. It might have taken me years, because here's the other backstory. I have known Marci. I knew her before I was coaching. I have had the deep pleasure of knowing Marci and being her friend for over 20 years now.

And when I first started coaching, she was one of my very first clients, a volunteer in the first free program I offered about 10 years ago. And then also, as I've mentioned, she has since joined and been this illustrious radiant contributing member and participant in the Art School and in the Art School Mastermind.

As for other changes, other pivots, which she calls third-down punts that she's made in her life, she spent 19 years working in corporate, climbing the corporate ladder, working in the insurance industry, only to realize when she turned 40 that she did not want to work in insurance for another 20 years.

So, she made a career shift and became the executive director of a nonprofit, Southeast Nebraska CASA, where they advocate for abused and neglected children in five counties in Nebraska. She had finally found a job that was a lot of work but brought her true joy.

Then, after only 15 months of working for CASA, she was diagnosed with stage four inflammatory breast cancer. She is when she really had to punt

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again and accept help from her defense, which she refers to as Marci's Tribe.

So, from February 2018 to April 2019, she fought cancer. Thankfully, she says, she was able to continue to work fulltime and that the kids that they serve at CASA gave her so much perspective about life. And that fighting cancer with the support of her tribe, her friends and family and community was fairly easy compared to what she witnessed kids that the CASA advocates work for, what they have to endure.

In April of 2021, she became a certified peer support specialist in the state of Nebraska and, by the way, her story that we'll talk about in this conversation of how that came about is also awesome and another example of Marci's manifesting magic and power, definitely something we got to celebrate when she was in the mastermind.

And too, we get to witness from when that idea first occurred to her to be a peer support specialist for other people who have ever heard the words, "You have cancer." No one else is doing that, but she saw the work that other peer support specialists were doing for people with substance abuse histories or people in recovery, people with depression. And she thought, "Okay, this could be something I could bring. How might this translate to benefiting, supporting the children that we work with at CASA?"

And I'll let her tell more about that. And then she thought, "How incredible would this be to offer to people who have ever heard the words, you have cancer?" And she speaks to compellingly, it's moving, on this work. And we got to see her light up with that idea in the Art School and now are celebrating to see it come full circle because she is now, at the time of this recording, launching her first peer support specialist group.

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And I know it is filling up and I also know it just happened to coincide with when I'm releasing this episode, which is awesome. And if that sounds like you or someone you know – if you or someone you know have ever heard the words, “You have cancer,” and you are looking for the kind of support and tribe that you will hear Marci describe in this episode, we will include the link in the show notes.

And if you're listening to this later than October '21, continue to check out her work because I have no idea if she will grow this and bring on other people. It's just in her nature. She is just a natural leader. And this is just the beginning. I see such an opportunity to change lives, to facilitate healing. And so, again, if you're listening to this later, still check out that link.

And so again, I am so delighted, so excited to be able to share Marci with you today. And then she actually does share at the end too a story about me from about 20 years ago that goes way back that, again, it gives me goosebumps thinking about it, the threads that are woven through our lives. So, there's that. And there is so much more.

Marci is known in our group too for being such a good student. She was always taking so many notes and had her pen and paper and you'll want to do the same when you listen to this episode, and also just sit back and enjoy her infectious laughter, enthusiasm, ambition, spirit, love for others, her work, her community, her family, her friends, and life.

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Leah: I'm thinking a good way to begin might be with your Art School origin story. Because you have one that's...

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Marci: Very different.

Leah: Yeah

Marci: That's what – when I was, because I was pulling out notes, I laughed because the first time you coached me was in December of 2011. You had just completed the Life Coaching School and you were doing your hours. And I had never heard of a life coach. But I was in a job that I just – it was like the whole square peg in a round hole job. And I was just like, there's got to be something better. There's got to be something better. And you posted on Facebook, "Hey, does anybody want free life coaching?" Sign me up. I didn't even know what I was signing up for, but sign me up.

And so, that was the first time I even experienced coaching. And then fast forward into when you created the Art School, started doing the podcast, I was one of your biggest fans because of our story. We've known each other even before 2011. So, I've just followed you.

And then, you were having the Art School. And you'll have to help me with dates. But it was right in 2018. And I got my diagnosis in February of 2018. And I remember thinking, "I need to work with Leah, but I need to beat cancer first." And I remember reaching out to you and sharing what a wonderful opportunity that Art School would be, because I know your work and your magic and how you truly listen to people and you don't give answers. You bring out the heart.

And I love that. And then so, my friend Hope Dunbar joined your first Art School and I saw how she grew. Part of it, I want to be like, it's Leah magic, but really it's the group magic. It's the whole Art School magic because you have a bunch of cheerleaders that say, "Dream big." And there's no reason you can't.

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Leah: So, I read the email that you sent over with your bio. And you can't help but notice the emphasis on support. And no matter what you're doing, whether you are healing through your cancer journey or whether you are running a nonprofit, which we'll talk about in a moment, or whether you are a traditional artist, the benefit, the support, and the community, to me that is one of the magics of the Art School and that was my intention and hope. But it's just even better to see it play out.

And I think it's a testament to that's how we're wired. We're wired for that. And then when we plug into what we are wired for and you see the way that people come alive, you're like, "Oh yeah, this feels right. This is why it doesn't have to feel so hard. You know, the myth of the lone wolf really being a myth and a destructive one too.

Marci: Right, and I love that when you said you set an intention, I had never really thought of that because my background is numbers and statistics and bar graphs and all of that stuff. And so, even as I was preparing for this, I had to chuckle because you had mentioned how you don't like to do PowerPoints.

And I have always been like, "I have to have my PowerPoint in front of me. I have to know exactly what I'm going to say. I have to practice my script." But when you go off script, so therefore the punch that I'm sure we'll talk about, when you let yourself do that and just be in the moment, that's when the magic really happens and that's what the Art School does. That's really what I have experienced in the Art School is watching all of these – and since I've been in it it's all been women. But watching these women really just – it's amazing. I don't even know the word for it. It's truly amazing. And I can't wait to see – we talk about Hope like, I'm going to see her be famous. She's already on her way. And I'm going to be like, "Hey, I know that woman personally."

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Leah: Yeah, you know, you said about it's like going off the script, like off the PowerPoint, it's like you can have your deck and then leaving it behind because the magic, like you said, is in the moment. And what I think there too, going back to your kind words about how I don't give answers but I deeply listen. And then I feel like that witnesses the heart and people's truth. And that lets it be known to them, lets them know what their deepest wisdom already is, when you have a container like that.

And that requires a surrendering of control, which feels like insecurity. And I know from my perspective, as the founder and the CEO and the coach, I had to work through that because I wanted to be like, I want to ensure, like if I control the experience then I can make sure everyone has an amazing experience.

But when I sat with my own truth and I really listened, like no, Leah, you might still create an extraordinary experience but it will be a fraction of what you do. You'll do what your magic is. You'll surrender to that capital C Creativity and you also, the belief – it's just a knowing that everyone that comes has an infinitely wise soul and that there is a divine intelligence running through them, and how could I ever think that my little bitty control could be superior to what is leading and guiding their life.

And so, to me, it really is about creating a really powerful container for the creative force of nature that is within each of the people to come forth and be expressed, and in ways that sort of defy what they thought their script about themselves was.

Because for you, for instance, you're like, "I'm not creative. I failed coloring." I mean, I believe everyone is capital C Creative. But for sure anyone that comes to me, their soul is like, let her know just how creative she is.

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Marci: Yes, and I love that story because it's so true. I hated coloring, still do. Mom tells the joke about going to my kindergarten conferences and the kindergarten teacher is like, "She just really doesn't like coloring." Because I would just fill in the lines as soon as I could. If it went outside, whatever, I was done. I had finished the assignment but there was no adding the frills that a lot of my friends were adding.

And so, I took that as, you're a numbers girl. You're not a creative, you know, and you have helped me see that, for me, I think a creative is art, music, whether it be paintings, whether it be screenplays, whether it be whatever people are creating. I see that as creative. You've opened my mind to that creative can just be helping someone in a different way.

And that's definitely where my job that I have now at CASA and my journey with cancer, I can't imagine it without – top of the line, I did pull out my notes from 2011 and the top question, what is this meant to teach me? I took that with me, Leah, from when you first told that to me back in 2011, I took it to work, I took it to life, I took it to parenting. But any challenge that I have been given, I thank you for that question. Like, what is this meant to teach me?

Because I'm a planner. I'm like, here are my goals and this is what I'm going to do. And when I graduated from college I was on the CEO track, "I'm going to bust glass ceilings." I had no doubt that's what I wanted to do. And I wanted to buy a house before I was 25. I bought it when I was 24. Just that very goal. And then life happens and those goals change. And that's okay. That's the creative part where you can't say, "Oh, I'm a failure." When those dreams change because life's giving you something bigger, kind of like your explanation of the Art School. If you tried to make it what it was, it wouldn't be as big as what it would become.

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Leah: Right, and we talk about when we are setting goals, to declare our desires and goals and dreams and add that, or something better.

Marci: Right, I love that part, “Or something better.”

Leah: And your medium might not be art materials. But your medium is leadership. And your medium too, like in the mastermind, it’s often like #moremarcimagic, #moremarcimanimatingmagic, like someone who animates things and creates a spark. And once you set your mind and heart on something, it’s like, okay that’s done, that’s done.

Marci: That’s the magic. I don’t know where that comes from. Well, I do. God has definitely blessed me with an amazing tribe, just an amazing support system and when I do have those things, whether it be for CASA or fighting cancer, I never had to fight or work alone. I always had tremendous support that makes the magic happen.

Leah: Well, that’s part of your community, I think, being somebody who – and again I think it’s one of your leadership qualities, and it’s a particular kind of leader though. You’re not like an authoritarian, but really the kind of leader who invites from those in your community, like an invitation to be fulfilled, to contribute in a way that’s meaningful, there’s a magnetism to your leadership and I think to your enthusiasm. That is compelling for people, to want to be around someone who has such an enthusiasm, whether it’s for life or for your cause.

And that is a creative attribute too, to be able to step into that and honor that and hold that. So, I want to share with the listeners a couple of the classic Marci manifesting magic stories from the Art School because I would love people to hear more the energy of your enthusiasm because I think this is part of your secret sauce, is just your, like, “Oh yeah, I’m

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going.” So, before we started last summer, I did a workshop on 10Xing your investment in anything, like just becoming somebody who that’s just a matter of fact, that you know that you can do that, like turning on a faucet.

And that’s a process, cultivating that. And you were like, “Yeah, let’s go.” And I also give people entering the Art School and the Mastermind the invitation to, if you want to play in this realm where you make your investment back before we start, let’s play, let’s go, let’s play with that. And again, you were like, “Yes, I’m on it.” And you did that and then some.

Marci: Right, that was, in Hope’s words, bananas. Because I joined the Art School Mastermind and the financial investment the first time, I got from a community catalyst. I was blessed with a grant that helped me basically develop an area for me, not for work. And so, I was like, “Yep, I know where that money’s going. I’m working with Leah.”

And so, I signed up. So really, it wasn’t even my money, but I was like, I’m going to play with this 10X this investment. And so, I was like, okay so I need to make at least \$50,000. That’s just the number that I set out. And I’m pretty sure it’s even before we got going, I wrote a grant for CASA. I wrote a grant and said, “Well, I’m going to try. I’m going to go for it.” And I had \$62,000. I was able to hire two temporary employees.

Because of COVID, it was kind of a COVID relief, like how to help a nonprofit market in a COVID world and fundraise in a COVID world and things like that. So, I was able to hire two fulltime employees. They were temporary at the time. And we did it. And with that fundraiser, we thought, you know, at CASA we always say it’s about \$1000 per kid to have a CASA volunteer so that our program can support that CASA volunteer, give them the training, give them the tools they need.

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So, we had a capital campaign and I'm like, if we raise \$10,000 that means we can recruit, train, and support 10 new volunteers. That will be awesome. We got \$25,000. So it's like those little things that I don't even really know that I'm doing, but I think you hit the nail on the head. When you are passionate about something, it just really flows.

God is using my gifts and my talents. I say I have not experienced foster care, so with CASA, it is something that I don't have that lived experience. But especially now that I've experienced cancer, I can't imagine what those kids have to go through. And so, telling that story – and our volunteers are the champions at CASA. They are the ones who are that child's consistent voice. And they are that child's – unfortunately in the foster care system, we have kids that have been in 12 different placements and five different caseworkers, but one CASA volunteer.

And so, that passion for me and that support, because I know when I was going through cancer, I had a tribe. I had a complete amazing tribe around me, driving me to treatments, sitting at treatments with me for six hours and we brought the laughter. We brought the laughter because we weren't going to sit around and go, "Are you feeling sick right now?"

No, I had college friends that brought college photos. And thank God they're not on social media, but boy, we had fun. So, they would bring those to chemo and we would laugh. And who does that? That's what everybody deserves. Everybody deserves a champion. Everybody deserves that support.

So, I think that passion that I have for my job and that I'm in the right field and God just said, "You're right where you belong and you're doing the things I wanted you to do." And even though cancer sucked, it taught me so

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much. And again, going back to that statement, what's that meant to teach me?

It's meant to teach me that even somebody who's diagnosed with the exact same cancer that I have has a different journey. And that's okay. That's their journey. And I can't judge that journey. I can help and support and give tips of what worked for me. But it might not work for them, you know. And I can also be that voice of saying, "This really sucks." And there's nothing else you need to say about that.

Leah: I'm just such a Marci fan and I have so much admiration and respect for the way you move through a difficult journey like that, acknowledging that this sucks. And something about the way you process and move, there's just such honesty and strength in that. And then I also felt your, at the same time, the simultaneous belief in the power of your attitude, in your mind as you went through it too.

I didn't feel like you saying that was at all being – and this is not a judgment on anyone who's been in this place. I've been in victimhood or self-pity for much less of a reason, so it's totally understandable. But I felt like you were able to say that and I did not feel like victimhood or pity in it. And I just stood back and watched that and was just like, "How was she able to do that? What is that?"

And it brings me back to something else that occurred to me as you were talking. And we've had this ongoing conversation about how you are creative. And it's like your medium – love is a creative medium, is a capital C Creative medium. Being heart-centered, you know, I talk about cultivating that extraordinary way of being that makes your extraordinary results inevitable, coming from your heart, being heart-centered is an extraordinary way of being. That is capital C Creative energy right there.

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And you've used it in your role as a CASA director and caring for this community of children and then the volunteers and also wearing your badass CEO hat of fundraising. Because too, part of the backstory was you took this organization that was really struggling and now it's in the black and thriving and you have this capital. What you've been able to do is astonishing. And again, it's from this place of leadership that is very heart-centered.

I want to pull that out for everyone listening who feels like maybe it's been to their detriment that they are heart-centered and that maybe you can't lead or lead powerfully being a heart-centered person. Because it's been quite the opposite for you and it's helped you move in this powerful way through your cancer journey and in this role as director of CASA. And now too, I want to talk about these new chapters of your life, like the creative chapters of writing, the Third Down Punt journey and theme, and also peer support.

Marci: Yes, well I'll talk about the Third Down first. That actually had been kind of sitting with me. My dad is a football coach and was an athletic director, and so sports was definitely in our family. And life, I had the plan. I was the list maker, the check off this is what I'm going to do, and life just never seemed to go as planned.

And sometimes, I had to basically, what I would say, "You've just got to punt. You've just got to punt." And even if it doesn't make sense. And so, that's when the Third Down Punt comes in, because it does not make sense to ever punt in the third down. But my thought is, sometimes you have to.

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Sometimes you have to punt during that third down and let the defense go in and refocus where you want to go offensively. And let the defense help you. That's the whole thing.

I get stuck in, "I can do this." I'm the terrible toddler, "I do it myself," you know, that terrible toddler attitude, like, "No, I do it myself." And my husband still catches me sometimes where I'll be carrying like 15 grocery bags and he's like, "I can carry some, I'm right here." And it's just that sometimes asking for help is hard. But it's those times, whether it be – I have so many stories we could talk about for hours. But my husband was my 17th blind date, you know.

So even just dating, you know, I had to just be like, "Whatever, I'll take a free meal. I'll go out with whoever you want to set me up with, whatever." And that's where I first thought, "I need to be an author. I need to write a book about all these crazy blind dates."

And so, way back before Steve, I even had been thinking I need to write a book, these blind dates are funny. But those were also punting. Those were letting someone else introduce me to someone. And then moving forward then with cancer, I couldn't do it alone. I absolutely couldn't figure that out by myself.

And even down to the clipboard, that's one of my favorite stories is every doctor's appointment we would go into, I would just hand the clipboard to my sister. She's a nurse and she would fill in the three pages of what's been happening in the past three weeks. Because I was going in every three weeks. And so, she would fill up the clipboard and I didn't want to.

So, I delegated that, and it's just letting people help, and that's where the peer support came from. Because at the treatment center, there were so

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many people that didn't have the people. And especially now during COVID, some people can't go in with their loved ones because of COVID. And so having a person and not a nurse that's read about it, not a doctor who's brilliant and can treat it, but someone to say, "Paperwork sucks." I hate writing down I have cancer every time I go to the doctor.

And that's something I never would have thought of, every time I go to the doctor I have to write down, "I have cancer." That part is hard. And I even laugh. I went to get bloodwork one time just at the smalltown clinic here and my whole life, I never had any preexisting conditions. I was fine. I did my physicals. And I would always just go, "No," or all the heart disease and this. I went into the clinic and balled because I'm going through chemo and I just did the whole line, again because my sister's done the clipboards. I just did my line and I went, "Crap, I have cancer." I was going through chemo and I forgot, like, that's a pretty amazing thing. But because I had delegated that out to someone else because it was hard for me.

Leah: Gosh, Marci, I just have a series of goosebumps. That is powerful, to be able to hand that over so you don't have that act again of writing it down. And that's one area. I mean, it's one. And you think in the scheme of things, how many of those single things there are and to be able to have support, that's tremendous to be able to literally hand that to someone else.

Marci: Yep, it was. And that's – so I kind of had this, like, cancer patients need to help cancer patients. One of my dear, dear friends here in my community was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer a year before I was diagnosed with my breast cancer. And having her walk beside me was amazing because yes, it was a different cancer. But it's scary. We both had very young kids. We both, you know, were working. All of these things. And the scan-anxiety and things like that.

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And we jokingly still, we've both been very blessed with clean scans. But about two to three weeks before each other's scans – and I do it for hers subconsciously – we just start eating. We just start eating because we know the scan is coming up and so we're just trying to shove that fear down.

That's not healthy, but I'll even text her and be like, "Are your scans coming up? Because I have this appetite of a football player." And so it's just that support of going – even though we're both doing well, it's still in the back of our heads always. And just knowing that you're not alone, that means so much. And the world needs more of that.

Leah: Yes, so you have actually gone on and completed a formal training.

Marci: I did. So, I had a speaker come to one of our organizations that talked about this peer support specialist. And as she was talking, the State of Nebraska right now has peer support specialists for people who struggle with mental health issues or substance abuse issues. So, when they're having those struggles, having a peer support worker who has that shared lived experience walk beside them, their recovery and longevity of life and just overall mindset improves dramatically having someone to say, "Hey, I've struggled with depression." And it's hard. And there are days that I don't want to get out of bed.

But I'm here for you, you know. And not being like, "Well, the book says you need to go for a walk." There's such a difference between someone who says, "I've been there and I know it's hard, and we can do this together," than someone who said, "Well when I read this case study, this is what helped this person." There's such a difference.

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And so, when she was talking to the group, I honestly made a sign of my mind blowing because the group knew I was trying to figure out how to support cancer patients, not in a cancer support group role. There's wonderful cancer support groups. Wonderful. But a lot of times, they are led by a nurse who has never had a doctor tell them they had cancer. And there's a difference.

And our family has lived cancer a lot in that my husband's parents both had passed away from cancer. And so, I felt like we had a pretty good knowledge of what you do with cancer. And then it hit the four walls that we live in, and that was totally different. So, even me supporting my friend Leanna who was diagnosed a year before me and being like, "Oh yeah, I remember when my mother-in-law did that, that has to be hard," is different than having someone who's been like, "Yeah, I have neuropathy. I don't know if I'll ever get the feeling back on my feet. But I'm thankful I can walk every day," and going, "We can do this together..." or have you tried this awesome motion? This is great. Just like, I know the neuropathy is hard and, you know, the side effects that are forever from the chemo.

Leah: So, as I'm listening to you talk, one thing – it's not one thing now, it's many – that I want to pull out is going back to that theme of what does this have to teach me, the way that you have allowed yourself to reimagine life as you go – and I felt like that was a quality that you came to the Art School, like very openminded about too, even though you didn't think you were a creative, was you were also like, as a director of CASA and as someone who has moved through this diagnosis, you were very much openminded and enthusiastic about what is the next chapter. Like, "I've done these things and what else does life have for me here?"

And I feel like too, bringing in your experiences, even though within our Art School group, we do have other people that are living through diagnosis

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and things now too, I feel like your ability to witness other people's journeys and your empathy is tremendous. And now how you are incorporating taking care of yourself as being you're still the director of CASA, you're also doing peer support, you have also begun your writing journey in earnest and I know a question that has come up for you is, "How am I going to do all of these things?"

And we have this conversation a lot in the Art School about doing it from a place of nurture, of not forcing yourself, not overworking, not over-efforting. And so, I would love to hear you talk about that too. Because for anyone listening who's like, "How is she doing this, peer support, CASA, she's in the Art School, she's writing?"

Because I have seen you too though take your self-care and take it to like the next level of really making that a priority, even beginning with when we started the Art School, creating space for yourself by telling your team, "These hours are my Art School time."

Marci: Right, yes. That's really some mindset stuff too that I work with. I love how you always talk about the gremlins. Like, whenever I do feel like, "Oh my gosh, how am I going to do all this? How am I going to do all this?" I love challenges. And so, I'll even use the first time I was in the Art School Mastermind, I was able to because I got that amazing grant.

So, I hired two temporary employees, so I really delegated a lot of stuff so I had carved out those group coaching times and that time that I was going to do it and it was perfect. And now this time, I have not made as many because I had an employee resign and I don't have the temporary employees, and so I've had to do some job searching.

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But the thing I love about the Art School is we have a community forum on Slack, and so that is tremendous. We can send each other, “SOS, the gremlins are talking to me.” And boom, you have all of these women going, “You’ve got this. You can do this. Take a nap.” And I remember, there was one time Betsy was like, “Marci, take a nap.” And I was like, “I hadn’t thought of that. Sounds brilliant.”

And it was because you can get stuck in your mind, like, “I’ve got to just keep going, I’ve got to just keep going.” And before I really was conscious of it, I did. I say I burned the candle at both ends and in the middle. I was queen of burning that darn candle. But that got me nowhere and it got me sick. You know.

And so, I’m a burn your hand on the stove type of toddler, apparently. And so, since cancer, I know that if I am not taking care of myself, I’m worthless. I can’t. I have to take care of the body I’ve been given. And if that body needs rest, you’ve just got to rest and you’ve got to know that it will be there tomorrow.

I am fortunately not a brain surgeon that’s doing brain surgery on people’s lives. I am a very important role in helping our volunteers help these children’s lives. And if there was a true emergency, I could respond. But I also have to know my busy to-do list will be there tomorrow. And sometimes, pushing that through isn’t doing it justice. But taking a nap sometimes is.

And that’s something I’ve learned through the community at the Art School. Like, take a nap, take care of yourself, remember, go take a walk if it’s nice out. You know, just those little mini breaks. The other day I was Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting and when I left, I had like 844 steps and it was

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two o'clock. And I'm like, I'm taking a walk because I've got to move my bones. I've been sitting in front of the Zoom way too long.

And before, I would have just been like, "Well, this is what it is. It's a busy day. I've got lots to do." But taking those little breaks, even if it's just for two minutes, that's important.

Leah: Yeah, like a phrase we've used is like nurture the numinous and that includes your body. And going back to this conversation too about this heart-centered energy and love being if not the creative energy, a very powerful creative energy, that goes inward too. It's like the love that you create and you contribute and you give to the world, but it really, to turn that back to yourself is not just a good idea and shouldn't just be an afterthought. It really is the foundation of what you're able to create later.

And so, all of these practices, like how can I do the loving thing for myself? Or what is it like to lead my own life with love? What does that actually look like? Well, sometimes it looks like closing the laptop and taking a nap and not forcing. And then other times it looks like mindset work, like doing the work to air out the gremlins who are just zapping your energy. And you realize, these are really unloving thoughts and I don't want to be available for this. This is kind of sucking my life force. And what do I need to do to train my mind to be a really inhospitable place for gremlins?

And I think the more we raise the temperature to turn up the love, then the less able we are to tolerate those things, which bring us down, which is good for our lives, and it's good for everybody else too around us and the places where our work flows downhill.

Because another thing too that I know that has resonated with you or that you've been a fan of is when we do the virtual – they've been virtual

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retreats this year because of COVID, but you've actually gone to like an Airbnb...

Marci: Right, and that has been amazing because it truly, while I miss the retreat part with the community, having the coffee with everyone in the morning and talking and drinking wine at night, we've kind of created that – I've created my own little getaway and luckily Hope Dunbar and I have been able to do that together. And that point of retreating is really, it's amazing how after that retreat, how clear and how focused and how productive, like all of the things.

You think, "Oh my gosh, I just took three days completely away. But you come back so refreshed. And I made the comment, I'm like, "I need to do this every month." Now, I do it quarterly I'll be doing good. But I mean, we need to take that time just to go. And if I stayed here and did it from my house, I know myself. I would be doing laundry. I would be doing all of the things in between the group calls. And instead, I'm taking walks and journaling. I'm petting a water buffalo at the last place...

Leah: Right, Lamas and water buffalo at your last place.

Marci: Yeah, a wonderful farm and I was like, "Oh my gosh, I've never even seen a water buffalo, let alone pet one." So yeah, so it's just being able to experience that.

Leah: And I wanted to bring that up for everyone listening who might be like, "Well, it's so hard to get away." And like you said, it can be hard to get away, but what would you say to anyone listening? Because you have two children at home. You have a husband, and again, a big job and all of these extracurriculars on the side that you're involved in. So, what did it

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take for you to commit to doing that for yourself and anything else you'd like to say for people listening?

Marci: Well, fortunately my husband is amazing. And he is supportive of whatever I – I said God gave him really strong shoulders for a reason because he helps in that area, so that when I do want to get away, he's like, "That's fine. We're fine."

When I worked in the insurance industry, he did most of the cooking and the cleaning because I worked 50 miles away. And so, that helps, I will say. But in the same token, find that support. If you don't have that support, find that support so you can get away because it is so important to disconnect. And I mean truly turn off the phone and disconnect. That is a feeling of – I always think of it as going old school.

You know, back in the day, my family had a trailer out at a lake here in Nebraska and we would go out there – my parents were both teachers and so we would go out there for six weeks every summer. There were no cell phones. People had to call the marina if they needed to get – like if there was a family emergency, they would call the marina. The marina would drive up to our trailer. And that happened. But guess what? They got a hold of us.

So, some people feel like you have to have your phone on all the time because what if something happens. Stuff's always going to happen. Turning your phone off for four hours, they're still going to find you if it's an absolute – unless you're a brain surgeon. You might need your phone on at all times.

Leah: And too, so it's like disconnecting from the phone. And then also like you said, you don't have your daily responsibilities. I mean, and this year,

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we do what we can with what we have, like with staycations and things. But I know for me, there's a tremendous difference, because I do work from home a lot. And going on a retreat is such a complete – it makes me aware of all the places where my mind lets the energy go out.

Because I'm like, I'm aware that there's laundry. I'm aware that people didn't do breakfast dishes. I'm aware that dinner is happening tonight. Whereas when I go on retreat mode, I'm like, what is this energy that I have? And it's like, it is a reconnection with myself, that when I move back into my regular environment, I just feel it's easier to be me in that regular environment, even with all these other responsibilities.

Marci: Yes, absolutely.

Leah: So I feel like you're also hitting it out of the park in terms of developing the creative lifestyle. Because when we talk about, you know, why can't it be part of being a creative is to like, have it be a lovely, beautiful life? Things are going to happen and there's going to be difficulty. And have support. And you were laughing. You brought college pictures and you were laughing at chemo.

Marci: Yeah, and actually I did go to a support group and I'll never forget, I walked into the support group and this lady, her eyes got real big and she said, "You go to NHO." And I was like, I looked at her and I'm like, "Yeah..." and she goes, "You always have fun at chemo."

Leah: NHO, so Nebraska Health...

Marci: Nebraska Hematology and Oncology, sorry. Yeah, where I did all my treatments was Nebraska Hematology and Oncology, NHO. And she had treatments on those same days and she's like, "You always have fun..." I

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always had at least – most of the time I would say five – minimum three people at chemo. And the support and just the randomness of it, but just being able to embrace that and not dread it. And I do know that that is because of the support.

Because I delegated all the bad stuff away. Like, we even talk about when we first saw the really bad scan. And my sister is a nurse. And it was horrible. And I can still see - everyone talks about that day when they get cancer. I can still see that day that my sister asked my oncologist, “How long do we have?” And I’ll never forget his response. He said, “Statistics say two to five years...” but he looked me in the eye and said that, “That is not your future.”

And I tell you what, of all that day – I mean, that day sucked real bad. But of all that day, I was like, “That’s not my future. I’m going to make a different – God has more plans for me.” And I clung to the Jeremiah 29:11, “God has a plan for my future. Like, this is my future, not statistically.”

And that comes from a numbers – I was a statistics girl. I was a, “Show me the bar graph.” I’ll never forget. He just looked me in the eye and he said, “That’s not your future.” And so, again, without that statement after that, I could have gotten stuck there. I could have been like, “Well, better live it up while I can because I’ve got two to five years.”

And I’m afraid that there are a lot of people that get stuck on those statistics. And I have built a really good relationship with my oncologist in that he points out, maybe five years ago those are where the statistics – but what medicine does in those five years, you can’t base your survival on old statistics.

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Leah: Well look at what medicine does and look at what it did for you to have somebody look you in the eye and say, like – I can feel the energy with which that must have been said too, “But that is not true for your future.” That right there is powerful medicine. That is healing right there. Wow. So, now Marci, what is in your future?

Marci: What is in my future? Well, I definitely, this peer support, I’m following the thread. I don’t know – I love my job at CASA and so I’m kind of, as I’m learning about this peer support, I also want to develop peer support for kids that are in foster care.

I feel like I’m one of those nurse sin oncology that may not have ever experienced what it feels like to hear the words, “You have cancer.” But I can empathize and help these foster kids. But I would love to create a program that, as foster youth age out, they have people like those peer supports that will help the younger kids that may be just entering that world.

I say it again and again and again and again, and people think I’m crazy, but I worked the entire time as I went through treatment because that helped me focus on people who had it worse than me. And I had a really bad cancer, you know. All cancer is bad. That’s another thing. All cancer is bad.

When you hear the words, “You have cancer,” it’s just bad. But I had to do the chemo, surgery, radiation, more chemo, and so I had a long – but as I went through that and I continued to work during the treatment, reading about those kids and the hard things they had going and then watching my volunteers champion for them, it made my cancer journey easier because I just wanted to champion for those kids. I wanted to help my volunteers.

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And so, it helped me shift my focus. So, with that peer support, I always laugh. I say, “Foster kids need it, cancer patients need it, diabetics need it.” Let’s be real, everyone needs it. Everybody needs a champion. And going through to become a certified peer support specialist was a real empowering thing for me because now I feel like I have the letters behind my name, that I can go and champion for this even more.

Because it’s amazing, and again, because I am a statistics person, I want to start studying in how peer support can help with physical conditions. Because right now, they have some studies that show it on mental health and on substance abuse. But they don’t have it on how it affects physical conditions. So, I’m the noisy gong. I’m the person that will say, you know, let’s try this. And I hear no a lot. I think that’s the key.

I was a telemarketer in high school. Like, I sold magazine renewals. And so, I said that prefaced me for, “No doesn’t scare me.” It was just like, alright, I’ll sell this magazine renewal to the next person that I call.

Leah: That is profound.

Marci: And it really is. If you’re not willing to follow the thread and then move, like if I followed the exact thread that I thought I was going to follow out of college, I would not be living in a town of 800 people and working for a nonprofit. But I can’t imagine life without it. So, you have to be able to say, “This is where I’m going.”

And I don’t know where peer support’s going to lead. But I’m so excited because no matter where it leads, it’s going to help people. And I have found that that’s what gets me going. And I say, in the insurance industry, when I first started, I worked in claims and I really felt I helped people during a hard time.

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You know, they had a hailstorm and I came and helped them during that hailstorm. Or they had a fire and I came and helped them during that fire. And then I did claims, I did sales, I did training. I bounced around in insurance. I worked in the insurance industry for a long time. And again, after I graduated from college I thought, “I’m going to CEO. I’m going to the top.” I actually told your husband when we both started in Des Moines, “Race you to CEO...”

And I meant it. I really meant it. And then life happened and I met the man of dreams. I mean, I wouldn’t change this life for the world, even the hard part. I wouldn’t. And so, when you say what’s next, well I definitely know I’m following this peer support thread because I’ve seen personally what it has done for me and I want to help others. So, we’ll see what happens next.

Leah: And I know, like, Marci’s word is good as gold and it’s good as done because I know too, like, full circle, when we did speak after your diagnosis and after I was starting the Art School and you’re like, “I really want to be a part of this and I need to focus right now, I need all of this energy,” you were continuing to work and beating cancer.

And you said, “But I will be there. I will be back and I will be there.” And I was like. Great, I’ll save you a seat. And then here we are. And yeah, again, it just gives me the chills to think about it. And again, you know, your enthusiasm is so contagious and as is that coming from the heart. You’re so powerful and it comes from the heart. It’s not like a dominating – and it gets things done though.

It comes from the heart and you were also no one’s doormat. And like you said, you come from the heart but also, once you set your heart and mind on something, that is as good as done and you’re not taking no for an answer.

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So, before I ask you the final question, which is anything you'd like to share with the audience, I also want to ask if you would share another story from this year that I think is such a classic Marci story that also embodies holding your vision, sticking with that to right when it looks like it's not going to happen.

And that was with this fundraising campaign this last year, you set the numbers and then you doubled the number and it didn't look like you were going to get it. Can you tell that story?

Marci: Oh, absolutely. When we first started the capital campaign, we had never done something like that at Southeast Nebraska CASA and so, we set it and we were like, you know, the most fundraising we'd ever done was about 5000 per event. And we were like, "You know what? We're going to get it for 10. We're just going to shoot the moon, right?" We're going to set it for 10 and if we get five well at least we made what we needed to make, because that's what we've always made at the fundraiser that we haven't been able to have.

So, very early on in the fundraiser, I remember you posted on the Slack – because I was like oh my gosh this is a pretty big stretch goal, this \$10,000. It would be amazing if we got \$10,000. And I remember you posted, "\$10,000? Done." And I'm like, that's right, \$10,000 is done.

But the first couple weeks, it was a five-week capital campaign and we had a lot of fun, a lot of online stuff. The first couple weeks, we were sitting right around \$1500, then we got to \$2000 and we were like, well, we're going to be happy with \$5000. We've got this. We're about three weeks in and we're like, this is getting kind of close. We really thought our energy and our fun and this online thing would be a lot more fun.

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And then, all of a sudden, we got a \$10,000 check. And we went, “What?” We got a \$10,000 check from an anonymous donor, and I went, “What?” I did not know who that was coming from. It was just out of the blue. And it took us – and then we ended up getting another \$10,000. It was like, here’s \$5000, here’s another \$5000, and all of a sudden, we’re at \$25,000.

Leah: I love this story.

Marci: I just, I remember going, “What?” I was able to hire a whole brand new position for a training and recruitment director because of that capital campaign. And then with that, we’ve started an internship program. We’ve started, like – there’s so many things because we have the stuff now that it’s just growing. And a little sidebar, when I started, there were about seven active volunteers. Either seven or nine. It was under 10. And we served five counties and we were serving maybe 15 kids. Right now, we are at 30 volunteers and we’re serving 60 children.

Leah: Oh, that’s awesome, Marci.

Marci: And so that’s just – I started in 2016 and our campaign was a CASA for every kid, and when I started in 2016, I remember saying by 2025 I want to have a volunteer for every child in our five counties. And that was a huge moonshot goal. Like, that’s nine years, and I chose 2025 because I’m a numbers person and you’ve got to have numbers that round up to five, whatever. But that would be nine years from when I started and I truly am keeping that goal. And I truly think we can do it.

Leah: Oh, you’re doing it, lady.

Marci: I’m doing it.

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Leah: Done.

Marci: Done, right? Yes, done. So yes, it is amazing. And that is, again, going back, I truly believe my insurance background and my numbers and my business and all of that stuff, the background I had was perfect to lead me up for a nonprofit job.

Going out of college I would have been like, “No way I’m working for a nonprofit. I’ll volunteer, but I’m not going to work for a nonprofit.” I love my job. And everything I did before getting it has helped create this. So, my path looks weird...

Leah: But beautifully so. Well, your background and then somebody who’s willing to shoot for the moon too, right, and invite that in. Because wasn’t there a part of that story where one of those \$10,000 checks was in a yet unopened envelope that was last-minute?

Marci: Absolutely, that was definitely – at the very, very end we got another \$5000 and I was like, “Huh?” Because at that point we were at \$20,000. I was like, what just happened? And then it was like, “Oh here’s another \$5000.” I’m like, who is this?

Leah: Oh, so good. Well, you know I love a moonshot. You know I love to shoot for the moon. And I think the magic of that is amplified when you are also heart-centered and you are creating from the heart and so thank you for being such a powerful example of that.

Marci: Thank you so much.

Leah: So, is there anything else that you’d like to share with listeners?

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Marci: I think it would be fun to share your moonshot. I think that's a funny story. So, I have known Leah's husband Brad before I knew Leah. And I've always called him my brother Brad because I didn't have a brother and he didn't have a sister. And we met in college and ended up at the same insurance place in Des Moines right out of college.

And so, we've just had this really fun friendship. And Brad and Leah came to meet – I don't think Steve and I were married yet. We were engaged. And so they came and we like to play cards and so we taught Leah pitch, the card game pitch. And Brad and I are super competitive people. And so, we were going to be on a team because Steve is as laid back as they can come. So, we are a perfect pair because he helps keep me calm.

So, I was like, Brad and I have to be – because we're going to beat you. Leah's never played before and I'm like, I can't deal with that, there's no way. And Steve's like, "I don't care." So, Leah shoots the moon, which means you're going to get all 10 points. And I'm like, "She doesn't even know what she's doing." Because if you shoot the moon and you don't get it, you lose. I'm so bad because I'm like, "Yes, we've got this game in the bag. Leah doesn't know what she's doing."

Oh no, that's when I learned, when Leah shoots the moon, she shoots the moon. And she didn't even have the two, so anybody who knows the game pitch, you don't shoot the moon without the two. She didn't even have this two, but Steve did, so they got all 10 points and they beat us. It was awesome. It was so funny. Because Brad and I are definitely sore losers. But it was fun. And that's the thing too is I am competitive and I'm a sore loser when it comes to card games, but I love playing them.

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Leah: That was so fun. I have such a fun memory. I remember that night really clearly. That was so fun. I'm like, "Shoot the moon? That's available?"

Marci: Yeah, you were like, "Let's just try that." And I'm like, "She doesn't know what she's... You will lose if you don't get all 10 points." And she goes, "Okay." So I love that. Whenever you talk about your moonshot goals, I giggle inside. So, I had to share that with the audience because that is your first, that I knew about, moonshot goal was a game of pitch back in 2003.

Leah: Well, you know, speaking of these threads that we follow, right, like there's the threads – there's what I thought my career and life was going to look like. And then it turns out though that there's this other thread that I have been following all along. And I remember in high school, I was pretty sure I wanted to end up working at the United Nations, which is one of the reasons I went to law school.

And I remember hearing and reading the speech from Kofi Anan and he was talking about how if we can empower women and girls with education and financially and provide them with the physical safety and also the material security and an education, that that's going to revolutionize the world, when we empower women, that that is vital for our next generations and the healing of our planet. And that just stirred something within me. I'm like, that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to end up at the United Nations or I'm going to work for an NGO and I'm going to do work that empowers women and children to unleash their potential. And...

Marci: Here you are.

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Leah: And so for a while, I was like, I guess I'm wrong about that. I guess I'm not going to do that work. And then come full circle, it's the thread, right? It is the thread.

Marci: I agree.

Leah: Well, Marci, thank you so much. This is a beautiful coffee chat.

Marci: I loved it. Thank you. Yes.

Leah I'm a huge Marci fan and I'm so grateful that I get to share your energy and magi and enthusiasm with our community. I know many people are going to be touched and inspired.

Marci: Well thank you so much for bringing out my creativity that I always had, but you helped me recognize that it doesn't have to be in a coloring, painting, or...

Leah: It can be outside the lines in all the beautiful ways for you that it works.

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So, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me, coach with me.

So, I mentioned in an earlier podcast just reflecting on the amazing people in my life, clients, yes, I am so lucky and so fortunate that this is my work, to be surrounded and working with people like Marci, with people with goals

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and dreams and aspirations for their life that are so beautiful, so brilliant, and also life-giving for others. And sometimes effortlessly so.

You know, focusing on your own healing, your own creativity, it is not selfish. I have seen it over and over again. I have seen it over and over again, when we really give ourselves what we need to be whole. Whether that is a healing journey or whether that is being whole in the sense of if you're born to paint you need to paint, if you're meant to sing, you need to sing, if you're meant to create, if you have a vision, you are meant to do that.

And doing that, that pursuit of that, in that pursuit of fulfillment, you become fulfilled. You are filled, you are made whole. There is something about that creativity, capital C Creativity, intentional, living, and not defaulting to statistics, which are a record of the past, and a record of other people's past as well, not defaulting to who you were 10 years ago, 20 years ago, five years ago, not defaulting to who you were five minutes ago, but continuing to say, "What is my future? My future is not dependent on statistics of the past, whether someone else's or my own. My future depends on where I am focusing."

And so, again, when I think about the people in my life, including Marci, I never want anything to be wasted on me. And I want to love deeply all of the people in my life. And part of that is appreciating their stories in such a profound way, thinking, "This person is intersecting with my life in this lifetime. Why? What a holy encounter."

Every encounter is a holy encounter, whether you know a person in real life for 20 years or for two minutes, or whether you hear a person's story on a podcast like this.

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Say to yourself, if my life is such that it is sacred and I am hearing this now because I am meant to, what message am I meant to hear and how am I meant to take it in and be changed? How am I meant to evolve and grow?

So, I want to invite you to take the time to jot down some notes on what spoke to you most compellingly about Marci's story and think too about others in your life whose stories come back to you again and again. If they do that on repeat, if the story is occurring to you now, you're listening to it now, just imagine that it's there for a reason, that it is life trying to get your attention and hand you something that could alter the trajectory of your life, that could change your destiny.

Here is the second part of the coach with me today. I really want to challenge you to be someone who says, "I see the statistics, and that is not my future." And then to instead really give yourself the time, the space, the support, the energy you need to focus on the future you are creating, and then to every day wake up and fight for that truth until it becomes just who you are. It's just what you live and breathe. And then that who you are creates an entirely different outer landscape external reality.

And the last thing I want to say, Marci's story about her doctor who looked her in the eyes and said, "But that's not your future." Think about what that did for her in that moment. And are we willing to be courageous enough, loving enough, brave enough to hold that space for others, where we see the potential for their future that burns bright and with so much life that we can look them in the eyes unwaveringly, or metaphorically and say, "That's not your future." Which in essence is saying, "Create your future."

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. Truly, thank you. I share these episodes with you and then I have the gift more and more of hearing from those of you listening and I just can't tell

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you how that touches me, how hearing from – shoutout to Joni who said she has been recently diving into my podcasts and loves the way that I take my listeners on a journey and that they are inspiring, and just the fact that she said she planned to plug in my podcast as she was making a long drive to pick up a loved one, I get the chills thinking about that.

And so, again, for everyone listening, put your work into the world and then let go. Put your heart and soul into the world and let go. And then oh my god, stand back and be astonished. It might take a while. For me, it's taken a while. In some instances, I guess maybe longer than I thought. And that's just fine.

But it comes back to you. Your heart is for giving. Your gifts, they are for you too. Your heart is for you too. Let yourself steep in them and enjoy them. And then oh my god, let it flow. Like, let it flow and let it give and keep that channel open because it's also how so much love and meaning can flow back to you.

So, I appreciate you deeply listening. I appreciate your reviews. I appreciate your shares. Thank you for being part of this work and a part of this movement. And if you want to work in closer proximity with me and with other kindreds, you can learn more about how to do so at my website www.leahcb.com.

I also, if you're not already on my newsletter, I want to invite you to join. I have, as one of my personal intentions and it obviously affects my career and my business too, but to just write so much more, to share so much more through writing and through that particular medium, including with my audience that is subscribed to my newsletter.

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These are essays, thoughts I've had, stories that I envision someday being in a book or perhaps being on a podcast, but really I have just a desire to write and write and write and share the energy of this work that way. And so, if you love to be in this kind of energy, if you are like, "Yeah, please bottle up some of that Michigan sunshine or manifesting magic like Marci's or mindset turnarounds," basically stories that invite you into a universe that is of your own creating, stories that invite you not only to imagine a brighter future, but to feel yourself so squarely in it.

Because I know, if I can get you to feel what's possible, if I can get you to feel your future, to touch something in you, to open a portal or a window into what is really waiting for you on the other side, that energy will come in and you won't shut that door again.

And one way I intend to do that is through my newsletter. So, I would love to have you in that community. You can sign up. I'm sure we'll have links in the show notes, but also on my website.

So, to close today, I want to reference that story that Marci shared at the end about how years ago we got together as couples and we were playing that game of pitch. Normally, I am not a card-playing girl. Like, maybe I just don't have the patience for it. But this seemed fun. And I watch other people having so much fun playing cards and I'm like, "There must be something to this."

But anyway, when we sat down to play this game and then they told me that there was a shoot-the-moon option, I was like, "Oh man, okay, there's a shoot-the-moon option, yes, then this is definitely my kind of game. And clearly there's no other option. I'm going to shoot the moon. Alright, that's what I'm doing."

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And then, you know how the story goes. And I could remember that moment, that night, when she retold that story. And it just lit something up in my heart and this recognition when I saw this thread throughout my life of being so fascinated with going to the moon. Whether it was when I was a sweet nerdy kid who went to space camp and space academy and wanted to be an astronaut, whether it is now with my moonshot goals and how I love being in that space and in that kind of creative space, big dream kind of creative space for myself and others.

And since you are listening, you know, that might not appeal to everyone. and yet I know some of you out there are like, “Oh hell yeah, if there is a shoot-the-moon option, whether it’s a card game or in life, sign me up. Sign me up.”

And so, that’s what I wanted to offer you to think about today. Again, Marci has so many incredible manifesting stories. I can’t even share them all here because I didn’t get permission here before, but we could have kept going and going, even just recently.

And that kind of energy is infectious. And there is something to getting that momentum going. And that is definitely something I am passionate about and a space that I want to be in. I want to be known for moonshots, not to impress anyone, but just because, oh my god, it’s just a thread in my life.

Clearly, I want to be known for helping others achieve their moonshot goal, for being in this fun, creative space. I mean, you’ve also heard by now Marci’s stories about laughter and fun. It’s not just fluff, guys. It’s the way the magic is made. It is a way to give the universe, your dreams, life, creativity a great big target.

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You come from the heart. That's where the bull's eye is. And then you blow up your energy and make yourself so big by your desire for life and your love for life, and for your desire for your goals. You can completely be in love with desiring your goal and not feel scarce at all.

Give yourself that. Give yourself the pleasure. It's more than pleasure. The joy, the aliveness of allowing yourself to love your dreams, to love what's possible, to love the journey living into it and again, from Marci's story, it's so clear how we're not meant to do this alone. It's so much more fun together. It's one of the meanings of life. And again, I think it's part of the secret sauce, part of that master manifester creative powerhouse, and for people like Marci, epic leader where you are able to lead organizations in ways where you turn things around and you turn lives around in the process.

So, let yourself revel in your moonshots. Let yourself go for it. And if you want to share what your moonshot is, I love being a witness and I can say there is magic to sharing and allowing yourself a loving witness who believes in you unconditionally. So, give yourself that, whether it's me or whether it's someone else.

So, shoot the moon, everyone. Have an amazing, beautiful week and I look forward to talking with you next time.