

Interviewee: Kellie Hamilton
Interviewer: Catherine Brouillard and Catherine Thomas
Date: February 17, 2023
Place: Assumption University
Transcriber: Catherine Brouillard and Catherine Thomas



Overseen by: Dr. Christian Williams, Assumption University

Abstract:

Kellie Hamilton is a Worcester, Massachusetts resident who was born in 1991. She is originally from East Brookfield, Massachusetts. She attended David Prouty High School in Spencer, Massachusetts. She grew up with her younger sister, mother, and father. After graduating from high school in 2010, she attended Worcester State University where she earned a degree in nursing. She is currently working as a registered nurse at UMASS [University of Massachusetts] Memorial Medical Center, a hospital where her mother and father previously worked. After reading a book on holistic nutrition, she became fascinated by the subject. As time passed, individuals started coming to her for advice about holistic nutrition, and she started a Facebook page, A Better Path to Wellness. In the early months of 2021 Kellie decided it was time to grow her passion and make it a business. Hard work and dedication fueled her efforts to become an entrepreneur. Kellie is an extremely passionate individual. She is an inspiration to many women around the country and continues to work toward leaving her own legacy.

Quote:

CT: Alight, okay, my name is Catherine Thomas and I'm here with Catherine Brouillard. We are in Worcester, and it is February 17th, 2023. We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women's health education, work, politics, and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences, and we thank you for your help in this important project.

CT: Is it okay if we record your oral history today?

KH: Yes.

CT: Okay, great.

CB: So just to get started with the interview, would you mind telling us your full name, including maiden and/or married name?

KH: Yes, so my name is Kellie Hamilton. I am not married. I have a, I guess you call it, domestic partner [laugh]. I live in Worcester.

CT: Awesome.

CB: Would you --- could you tell us a little about what area in Worcester?

KH: Yes, so I live in the Green Hill Park area off of Lincoln Street, North Lincoln Street.

CT: And when were you born?

KH: 1991.

CT: Okay.

CT: Do you have any children?

KH: I do not.

CB: And then do you --- what cultures or ethnicities do you identify with? Anything about your family background that you would like to share?

KH: I am white Caucasian. I recently did a DNA test and my dad was very intrigued to find out we were a little Greek, so we didn't know that our whole lives. So, that was a little fun fact we found out recently.

CB: That's nice.

CT: Okay.

CT: Could you tell us a little bit more about your parents?

KH: Yes so, my father is from Worcester, my mother is originally from the Leicester/Spencer area. They met actually working at UMASS Medical Memorial Center where I work. My dad

worked in campus police and my mother was a registered nurse, and they have a very cute love story.

CT: That's cute. [laughter]

KH: Of how they met. Yep, and they moved out to the country to East Brookfield, got married, bought a house, and had my sister and I. So, I have a younger sister as well.

CT: Cute.

CB: What's the name of your younger sister?

KH: Casey.

CB: Casey. And how old is Casey?

KH: She is 27.

CB: Perfect.

CH: And what was your neighborhood like growing up, generally?

KH: Oh, we had a very, very fun neighborhood. We lived in a kind of like a combined cul-de-sac. I had ---it was not a dead end, but it had a bunch of dead ends off of it, and there were never a lot of cars. And we --- like old time movies we played in the streets, we played everything. We played right in the middle of the road. I grew up with a lot. My sister and I were tomboys growing up. All of the kids in the neighborhood our age were boys, so we grew up playing contact sports and soccer and hockey and football and manhunt. I don't even know if you guys know what that is. [laughter]

CT: I do, I do.

CB: It was one of my favorite games as a kid.

KH: Yeah so, we grew up, you know, at rough and tough with a lot of the younger men in the neighborhood and we just had a great time. I also --- my best friend of, I don't even know how many years now, since I was eight years old, lives in the same neighborhood as me. I just knocked on her front door one day and we just started playing and the rest is history, [laughter] and she is still my best friend to this day.

CT: That's so cute.

CB: That's awesome.

KH: Yep.

CT: So, you did say that you were, or you were originally from North Brookfield. Could you tell us a little bit about...

CT: Sorry, it was East Brookfield.

KH: Yep, East Brookfield.

CB: Oh, excuse me, East Brookfield, and then you have recently moved to Worcester, you said?

KH: Not recently so... I, so I'm a graduate of the class of 2014 from Worcester State [University]. I lived at school. It was just kind of far enough away, yet just close enough to home. So, I started there in 2010, so I guess I technically kind of lived in Worcester since 2010. I had an off-campus apartment and then from there I just stayed in Worcester. I got a job at UMASS right out of school, and it just seemed like the best fit for me.

CH: Great.

CH: Being in Worcester for I think like 13 years now roughly, which changes have you seen in Worcester over that period of time?

KH: I think the city is trying to do a better job at making it a kind of cleaner, friendlier, place.

CB: Mhm.

KH: I think the demographics over the years have changed which has made that complicated. I think a lot of people are moving out this way, as you know, from Boston. And there's a big push for people to move out this way and take the train into work every day. And I think that's really

helpful to the economy in a way. I do also think though it's come with challenges because, as you know, as you grow infrastructure in a bigger city, you run into more issues. Drugs are clearly a problem in this city. You know, there's a lot of—I don't know how to word it—there's a lot of changes to be made. I think that they're doing a lot of great things. I hate to see a lot of the historic buildings they're talking about tearing stuff down and putting up condos and putting up things like that.

CB: Mhm.

KH: That is sad to see because I remember walking around the city, you know, 10 or 13 years ago. It looked different, it looks beautiful now, but I would still like to see some of the old charm stays. Which I think they're trying, they're definitely trying.

CT: I definitely agree with that.

CB: So, speaking of just the overall city of Worcester, do you have any family members that live in Worcester or are they still out in Brookfield or?

KH: Most of my family still lives kind of scattered through Worcester County. I have relatives in Holden, Paxton, East Brookfield, Spencer. As far as I think, I have a couple out in the northern part of the state. So, we're kind of scattered.

CB: Okay. Alright, just speaking of family, do you feel like you're very close with your family? Do you have great relationships with your siblings? Close relationships with siblings, parents, cousins, etc.?

KH: Yeah. So, we're like any family, you know no family is perfect. I think that's important for people to know. Nobody's family is perfect. We do a lot of things together, we're very—we're a big biker family. We like to go on bike rides, and we like to go to the beach. My parents took us to Cape Cod, I think, every year, sometimes twice a year from the time my sister and I were maybe four and born. So, we are—my parents are snowbirds in Florida now, but when they come home, we like to be by the pool. We always kind of seem to be by water and doing something. We are big pickleball people. I should say that if I don't say that in my interview, my mom would be like, "You didn't say we like pickleball!" [laughter] But, yes, we definitely like to be active and do things together.

CB: Great.

CT: What do you think women's experiences, I know this is kind of shifting the question, but where do you think, like what do you think women's experiences in Worcester specifically have been, have been like?

KH: It's hard, I hate to generalize, I don't want to generally speak for all women.

CT: Yep.

KH: I think that—so, I'm a very new chamber of commerce member for my business. And they do a lot of great things like women's networking events. So, there's a Women's Expo coming up just for women in business. I mean people come from all over really the state—I mean the country, to come to this. They push women's business league meetings. They're really trying to get women to break that ceiling and it's cliché to say that because, you know, I feel like we have been saying that since the '60s and '70s, the '80s. I mean there still is major inequality in the workplace for women, but I think now in 2023 we do such a better job at addressing it. And getting women to know their worth and their power and to walk away from situations that are not serving them, that don't serve them in the light they should be in business and entrepreneurship and in everything really.

CB: Mhm.

CT: Great, yep.

CB: So just going off of that kind of we're going to shift a little into education, then kind of go into your work and obviously we definitely want to know how you kind of became and everything you have. So, I know you mentioned Worcester State, could you just tell us a little about through elementary to college level?

KH: Yes, so as you know probably, East Brookfield is a very small town. I think they have a population of 2,500 people so we didn't have one—one blinking yellow light that's about it. [laughter] No grocery stores, no nothing. So, I graduate. From the time I started kindergarten to the time I was in sixth grade, I went to school with the same like 28 kids. Like, that was all we knew, we didn't know anybody else. So, it was all very small classes, everybody knew everybody, very small town, kind of country feel. And then we regionalized. So, when you get to the middle school grades, we went to Knox Trail [Knox Trail Junior High School]. So, I did two years of middle school there, where we got to meet this whole new town full of kids.

[Laughter].

KH: But my sister and I were in sports, so we kind of knew some people. But that was great. We got involved, my sister and I were very big into soccer at that time. We did dance, oh my gosh, I did dance for 13years. My parents had us in everything. I was in voice lessons, Girl Scouts, they really kind of wanted us to be well-rounded I guess.

[Laughter].

KH: I guess, I guess it worked in my favor. So, it was a fun time, it was fun to grow up and have access to do all of those things. And then I went to David Prouty [High School] from 2006 to 2010. I know the schools are changing a lot now, when I was there it was great. We—our football team won the Super Bowl which is kind of huge in the no-name high school.

CB: Yeah.

CT: Yeah, small town.

KH: Yeah, for a small town. I played field hockey; I was captain of the field hockey team. I was co-captain of the tennis team my senior year. I really --- it's hard to say you enjoy those years, I don't know if anybody really enjoys them.

CB: [Laughter.]

KH: You do a lot of growing up, or so you think. But it was definitely --- it definitely helped shape me, I think. I think growing up in a small town and getting out of it. I know a lot of people that didn't, and you know, I'm happy I didn't stay and settle. And then I went on, and I went to Worcester State. I lived at school, that was very important to me. I had the option to stay at home and commute and I really wanted to get the whole experience. So, from 2010 to 2014 I lived at school, and I worked. I held a job since the time I was 15 1/2, I was the birthday girl at Bogey Lanes [Bowling Alley].

CH: Oh.

CB: Laughter.

KH: Ten years almost, I think. I left there immersed in it really and, you know, that was ---I think now saying it out loud, I think that was key to some of my professional success is being able to talk to people, being able to converse with people. It's a skill people don't realize. Some public speaking or just intricate speaking makes people very uncomfortable. And you don't have that luxury when you work in customer service, so I think everything in a way really kind of shaped who I am today. All these little things that you guys are asking, that's putting into perspective for me.

CH: Yep.

KH: So, thank you.

[Laughter].

CH: Going back to --- because you said you played field hockey and, did you play anything else?

KH: Field hockey, tennis, and I skied.

CH: Okay. Do you think, being obviously a woman growing up in the 2000's, that women in sports have changed at all, that you think that you have seen since you were a teenager?

KH: Oh yeah. I think, I mean, I was never big into really watching I wouldn't say women's sports. I mean, like, we're a big football family. You ask what we love to do together. We love football, we watch a lot of football together. Kind of who isn't right?

CT: Right.

[Laughter]

KH: Patriot's [New England Patriots] fans dynasty. But I think now as I get older, I so much have more of an appreciation. Because I'm 31 years old now so, I'm not this young thing anymore. And your body changes and I think these women who can compete at such this high level in sports, I have such an appreciation for. And watching, you know, these women break record after record, whether it be in the Olympics [Olympic Games] or the WNBA [Women's National Basketball Association] or now that women's flag football league is this big thing and I think, I think there's going to be so much more that happens. And I really hope that they get the support they deserve because it's not just men that can do these things, you know.

CT: Yeah. Exactly.

CB: Okay. So, you did talk a little bit about barriers and how you do know a lot of people coming from a small town. I mean I can definitely relate to you that don't really get out of that small town or anything like that. Did you have any struggles within any of your educational standpoints, whether it might be high school, college, undergrad, anything like that?

KH: I think standardized testing is hard for a lot of people and I—I was a good test-taker probably 90% of my academic career. But I was very nervous, I almost—and I don't know what I would have done—I almost didn't get into the nursing program at Worcester State. Ironically, my SATs [Scholastic Aptitude Test] were kind of on the same days I had like, major field hockey games. So, I at the time—you know if you could go back and tell yourself all those years from now, this is the most important test of your life [laughter]. You know I didn't see it that way, I didn't really. I just showed up and I took my test and my grades were good, but they weren't, you know, best nursing school in the state competitive-good. I was so panicking, and I said, "Well you what am I going to do?" There were a couple schools I didn't get into and there were a lot of schools that, that you know, asked me to apply and I was flattered. So, I, I took the ACT [American College Testing]. I don't think a lot of people know about it. I think maybe nowadays. Back when I was in school, people were like, "What is that, what is that test?" You always have options and that was a thing that my parents really tried to drive home for me, is that just because there is a roadblock there's a way around it, that you always have options, you just have to search for them, and that's what I did. I took prep classes. I took the ACT and I --- you know I studied a little bit harder, took it again and I did better and it, it all worked out. I don't know what I would be, what I would be saying sitting here across from you guys had that not worked out. But, yeah, and I think, you know, Worcester State, I can't say enough about their nursing program. They pride themselves that they have a very high pass rate. It was 100% for a very long time for their standardized NCLEX [National Council Licensure Examination [for] Registered Nurses] test which we know doesn't really mean anything. You can, you can be a great nurse and not 100 on your NCLEX.

CT: Right.

KH: Or pass the NCLEX first time or three times. But I think they prepared me very well for my career in nursing, that set me up to, for on my path to entrepreneurship. So, I really can't say enough great things about them.

CT: And did that lead you to want to work in Worcester? Like when you left college?

KH: At the time yes, because Worcester State had a really good partnership with UMASS. They do this new grad nursing program. And it was also very competitive. There were about a hundred of us they interviewed, and we got to, kind of based on your academic scoring, kind of pick where you wanted to interview. So, you had a leg up so that was incentive to do better.

CT: Yeah.

KH: If you wanted to work in psych [psychology/psychiatry] or you wanted to work in the ICU [Intensive Care Unit] or Peds [Pediatrics], you had to excel so that you could get the first interview with those people and be seen. So, that was a very big factor for me staying here because I said, "I have no experience and who's going to hire me?" You know what I mean? I'm new and I'm malleable, but I'm not marketable right, so the fact that UMASS was very kind and took a lot of us at the time because they needed bodies. And they wanted, you know, Worcester State nurses. That was a huge piece of why I stayed in town and didn't explore other options of things.

CB: Great. Thank you for sharing that. Going back, you did mention your boss of your first job, you mentioned your parents were very supportive. Were there any other people that were very important in terms of mentoring you, either when you were younger, throughout nursing school...

KH: Oh gosh, yeah, I'm trying to think I could name, I could name a lot of people. I think there were a lot of the professors at Worcester State that are no longer there so, it's kind of moot for me to name them, because I don't even know if they'll hear this interview. [laughter]. They, they were great, they were hard but they wanted us to succeed. And I think that --- I now have a mentor, Tina Duffy, fantastic. She's a health coach, who actually lives on the other side of, of the continent and she has been nothing but supportive, just what a resource. I think it's really important when you start something new, you have somebody on your side that is willing to mentor you. People use that term very loosely and it's a lot of work. It's a lot of work to be a mentor and I like to mentor younger people. I precept new nurses' work, I sponsor interns from Worcester State's public health department for my business. You know, even just people that, that message me that are looking for, for just help or what to do. I've helped ---I know nothing, I'll be very honest with you ladies [laughter], I know nothing about running a business. And I can tell you more about that [laughter], but it kind of just spiraled into this whole thing and

people now ask me like, “What do I do, what do you recommend I do?” And I’m very honest and I say, “You know, I don’t have all the answers, but I’m willing to tell you what I did, and I hope it works for you.” Yep, like it worked for me and let’s figure it out together and I think, I think that’s huge, and I think more people need to do that. I think that as women, and also men, but we’re talking about women in this interview [laughter]. There is such a need to be competitive, to step on each other and get to the top and who can say they’re the best, And I think when you’re younger and they’re trying to teach you success and drive and motivation, that’s important to harness that. But as you get older, you can’t live your life that way. You need—it has to be this supportive, collective kind of environment and I want to be remembered for doing that and facilitating that.

CT: Awesome.

CB: Thank you,

CT: That was awesome.

CB: Yeah, thank you. Very inspiring. [laughter]

KH: Thank you, thank you. [laughter]

CT: Considering that I wrote down a question. Do you --- if you could go back like and change anything, even if like your, like in your collegiate career, your academic career, like in general, would you change anything, or did you...

KH: That’s a really hard question.

CT: Like kind of did you ever have doubts when studying nursing or, I mean I’m sure everyone has doubts.

KH: It wasn’t --- failure wasn’t an option. And that sounds again, very cliché, but I was so determined. And the funny thing is I never --- I didn’t 100% know if I wanted to be a nurse. I thought for a long time, I thought I wanted to be a massage therapist. I thought I wanted to be a forensics nurse or forensic scientist or, you know, I had a lot of interesting things, but like I said, my parents did a really good job of trying to guide me into a career that was going to help set me up for life. And I come from a family of nurses. My grandmother’s a nurse, my aunt’s a nurse,

my great-aunts are nurses. Like I said, my mother's a nurse. I have a lot of family that is in health care, in different branches of health care. So, I grew up listening to stories and hearing that, so it wasn't taboo for me, and I actually liked it. I liked to hear about, you know, the things normal things people wouldn't discuss at the dinner table, we joke about that to this day. I think if I—I don't think I would change anything to answer your question. Because I wouldn't have known what life would be like, right?

CB: Right.

KH: And I would—I think where I am in my life right now, I'm very humbled, I'm very proud. I think we all wish we were at a little bit of a higher status than we are right now. But being from like a hindsight perspective, I think everything kind of fell into place. I mean it took me awhile, I didn't get into the ICU right when I wanted. I was denied for a position, and it was promised to—someone actually took it and then ended up leaving, so you know, resources were wasted.

CT: Right.

KH: And I was very discouraged and I, I had a very sour taste in my mouth from the get go. I wasn't sure if that's what kind of nursing I wanted to do. I eventually worked as a hospice nurse. I moonlighted there for a while and I loved that job and I thought, maybe I'll leave my whole career for inpatient and go do this. And, and I can't really tell you why I didn't do that, I just didn't feel right. It didn't really seem right to me and I try to trust my gut in a lot of aspects. So, I'm rambling, but I, basically...

CT: No, no I think it's a good thing. We love to hear it.

KH: Basically, I think you, you make my brain hurt [laughter]. I think that I am very happy the way things turned out, and I don't wish any different because I wouldn't know what to expect. That's my, that's my final answer.

CT: Yeah.

CB: So obviously you're very passionate about your work as a nurse, but you also are an entrepreneur.

KH: I am, yes.

CB: Could you talk to us a little bit more about that?

KH: So, my first book that I ever picked up when I finished nursing school, that wasn't a nursing textbook [laughter], was a book on like, basic holistic nutrition. And kind of the body's chemistry of how you can heal it from the inside. And I was so fascinated with this concept because I had just graduated from one of the top nursing schools, you know, in the state. I had gone to school for four years and I had never learned more than like 20 minutes about basic nutrition. So, I had just started a new job and I was very anxious about that. I was a new nurse. I was channeling all my energy into that, but I was reading a lot. And any book I could get my hands on that had to do with holistic health and wellness I started reading. And this kind of, this started in 2014, so this spiraled over about—I've been a nurse, it'll be nine years this year so about five-ish years ago. People started asking me like, "How do you know that? Like why do you eat that way?" And people started coming to me, so I started giving like free nutrition advice. And I was writing things down for people. I was sending big, you know, notes on the apps and people said, "You know, you really should do this, like this is kind of, like this is kind of like a thing." And that was before holistic health. I mean now the trends are saying it's going to be the most—integrated health is going to be the upcoming thing within the next five to ten years and we're seeing it more now. But even five years ago it was still even more taboo. And I said to my friends ---I'm like my friends and my colleagues and my family and said, "I don't really, no I don't think so." [laughter] I said, "No one's going to--- who's going to want that?" And then it started with my Facebook page was actually the first thing I ever did, a Better Path to Wellness Facebook page. And I would just put free tips and tricks of the day. And did you know hibiscus tea lowers your blood pressure systolic by 4 points if you drink it? It just started and it spiraled into this thing and people really responded. And so fast forward a little bit, a couple more years, the pandemic happened. The surgical ICU I work in, and the clientele that I love no longer existed. They weren't doing surgeries on people, elective surgeries and everything kind of got shifted. All of a sudden, I was thrown into this medical ICU role that I didn't love, no nurse loved. You know people, it was very bleak there. So, in the beginning of 2021, after doing that for about a year, I said, "I am going to do it. I'm going to just do it because I was home with my thoughts and I'm going to file for LLC [Limited Liability Company], and I'm going to apply to be a small business. And if it fails, it fails, and I can say that I tried. And I will dissolve it and put my tail between my legs. And I always have nursing to fall back on." And, I did it. Like I said, I had no idea what I was doing or how to do it. I spent a lot of time Googling, [laughter] I can tell you that. And I can't say enough—you asked me if I had a mentor earlier. SCORE [Service Corps of Retired Executives], they're a great resource for anyone listening to this that wants to start a business. You can get a free mentor from them. Or you can just go on their website and read anything you would want to know, or how to start it. So, they were a great resource as well. And I just—my mentor, Tina, I hired her as a business coach, and I just worked it. When I wasn't at work and I wasn't sleeping [laughter], or eating, I just worked on my passion. And it evolved. I started, you know, had social --we had LinkedIn now. I built a website.

I started reaching out to my gym. I work out at Crunch Fitness, which is a corporate gym, but they franchise, so I have a really good relationship with several of the gyms in town. And they were so kind to me. I can remember the first event I ever did, I went in with my little folding table and I had a poster board like [laughter] you literally make for a fifth-grade science project. And I put all these fun facts about holistic nutrition and statistics on chronic disease on it. And I cut out pictures [laughter] and I put them on, and I showed up and I had no idea...Fast forward, you know, two, almost two years to the day, was January I started my business in 2021 officially, what it was going to be. And it's just really humbling and really, really neat to look back and see what I was doing and what I am doing.

CB: Mhm.

CT: So, when you --- sounds like you are very busy, all the time. [laughter]

KH: People say that to me, and I never really feel like I'm doing enough. Which is funny because people are like, "I don't know where you get the energy." I don't feel like I have it, I must fake it very well.

CT: Yeah.

CB: You make me tired just listening [laughter].

CT: I had a question. What do you do, you know when - what do you do for fun, for leisure? Do you go out? Do you...

KH: I love to travel.

CT: Okay.

KH: It's funny because I think back on all of the places I've been and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I did go there," because I forget, I've been so many places. So, I, I have a lot of friends in the military. So, they're scattered all around the United States and then some. So, I love to go visit them and support them and they're very kind to me. They host me and we do a lot of fun things together. I love, like I said, my boyfriend ---we love to travel. We're recently new cruise people [laughter], went on my first cruise, so I liked it. So, we're going to use that as a means to travel to see even more places. I'm very big into fitness, I love, like I said, anything I can be doing that's kind of bettering myself while providing enjoyment, I'm a big proponent of. I love kayaking. Every year around my birthday I seem to buy myself some kind of wellness gift, that I normally wouldn't buy myself anytime of the year. So, a few years ago, I bought, I bought a

kayak. And that's my latest thing, the last couple years I've pushed it on top of my Kia [automobile] all by myself [laughter] and I ratch and strap it down [laughter] and I take it all over and I love to kayak. We love pickleball, we find pickleball courts kind of everywhere we travel. I love the beach. I really --- you asked me you know if I could've moved anywhere, it would have been towards the coast. I really feel like I was meant to live there. I just feel so at peace and calm around water, and I think it's really healing for a lot of people's health and wellness. Not everybody, not everybody likes water, but I definitely resonate with it. So, I try to be near the water as much as I can. I work out a lot, I am very big into fitness, I like to try new forms of fitness. I am very big into weightlifting. I have—a lot of my friends are bodybuilders or I have BB pro competitors. So, it's fun to watch them and kind of dabble in that world. What else. I like to read, I love to read anything and everything really. Oh, I know, oh gosh I guess I have to say it. [laughter] So I love music and I am somewhat known amongst my friends as the karaoke queen. [laughter]. If you are looking for me, you can find me at like a karaoke bar [laughter] or karaoke restaurant nine times out of ten. So, so, yes I'm always putting on a show I guess you could say so. That's a big hobby of mine. [laughter]

CB: One question because you were mentioning your love for travel, have you ever looked into, just out of curiosity, like travel nurse or anything like that because your business like you did want to stay local, of course.

KH: Yeah, so they actually even do offer --- like they call it local traveling, we have several of them at the hospital now. I had thought about it when I had first got a little bit of experience. Unfortunately, you know, UMass is a great company to work for in the respect that they pay really well, they have great benefits, they're kind of seniority package and their pension, and their retirement and all that is very great. And I didn't want to lose it, so it wasn't really an option. And then, I mean, I'm sure everybody knew during the pandemic people left en masse to travel. I had just started my business and I felt like if I had done that, I would have been abandoning my passion. So, I struggled with that, I mean a lot of people pushed me. I actually even thought about moving with my parents to Florida part time and doing that in Florida, where people were making crazy, crazy, amounts of money. I think it's important to say this in my interview because I would really like this to be archived. Because I say it a lot and I really don't think people believe me. The money is not worth my soul. I do not do anything based on money. Money is important, do not get me wrong. I think that's important for you guys to know as going out into the workforce and looking for jobs. You need a job that's going to support you, but at the same time, I had said right from the beginning when I graduated, I was never going to sell my soul for a paycheck. I didn't love the things I was hearing about the hours, and the conditions, and I loved the fact that I would have gotten to travel. But I had my sights set on different things. I wanted to

be my own boss. I wanted to work the hours I wanted to work. I wanted a flexible schedule. I wanted to be able to travel or pick up my kayak on a Monday afternoon at 3:00 o'clock and do what I wanted. And I didn't feel like I was going to get that in some of those avenues.

CB: So, thank you for sharing that. That was very powerful, honestly, I really liked that. So, what is your everyday routine then, because you seem to be insanely busy. So how do you balance all these different priorities and responsibilities and roles in your life? Even just typical household chores, just stuff like that?

KH: Yes, so I rent a two-bedroom apartment right now. I am house hunting like a lot of people. I kick myself I didn't buy when I should have, but it's just so—that's a complicated question. You can edit this kind of however you see fit, so I work night shift. I work 12-hour night shifts and I was doing a flex schedule for a very long time. I would do two 12s one week three 12s next. I just recently cut down to two 12-hour shifts, which is considered part time. So that I can work part time at the hospital, I have benefits, you know, have a steady paycheck. I always wanted to have a backup plan. My friends will tell you that about me, I always have a backup plan. I think it's very important in life, and in love. In business you always got to have a plan. If it doesn't work out the way you thought, or at least some kind of an idea, it doesn't have to be a plan. You've got to have an idea, so I cut down to do that. I channel my energy into this. So, I sleep when I can. Sleep is so important in health. So, you know working night s is a risk factor that I take on. So, I sleep when I can, I work out when I can, I love to meal prep. You guys ask me another hobby. I feel like the average working busy professional and/or mom should not be making two meals a day, seven days a week. That is like absurd to me. So, I will batch cook everything, so that healthy food is accessible and ready to me, it's already done. I don't have to worry about it, which frees up a lot of time for me, which is great. I teach people how to do that in my business because I feel like that's a very valuable skill to have. I have a great partner. I really should say that. He is away for the military right now, which also makes it hard because you go from doing the day-to-day and you're depending on somebody, and you know you do it together. It's a new kind of thing I'm learning to adjust with, I want to say about that. So, that's been difficult because usually there's two of us, right? You have somebody to help pick up the groceries, I need trash bags, can you feed the cat, can you do all these things? So, it falls on you. So, I try to fit an hour a day into Everything Fitness, you know, several hours for sleep, cooking. I try to give my time, you know, and things lack. That's the thing about being a business owner, and people don't understand. And I never want to come off like antisocial or crass, but the truth of it is, you just forget. Like, you forget you haven't talked to your sister in two weeks. You forget you didn't call your mom since last Wednesday, you know, like I can't tell you. My friends will laugh. I literally treat Siri like a real person. Like, the reminders on my phone are out of control. Like I'll be like, remind me that I need to eat in two hours, it's really bad. But there's just only so much room in here, I think for a certain amount of things. I really do think I have like a high functioning probably semi-undiagnosed ---like I don't want to say like ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder] but like ADD. But I feel like that's a superpower. I feel like so

many people want to—and it does get me in trouble. I can't tell you how many things I've started, like I can't even put something in the microwave for two minutes, and then I'm like “Oh, I have two minutes. I could do --- let me go charge my laptop, and then go to the bathroom, and then I'm going to wash this dish,” And then it's like --- and my boyfriend's funny because he'll see me, and he'll be like, “Didn't you heat up your food like 40 minutes ago? Will you sit down and eat? Will you sit down and eat?” And it's funny, and he'll probably listen to this and laugh. But, you know, I think if you channel it a certain way and I'm trying to be really good at productivity, and like time blocking, and time management that really saves me. And you guys will probably laugh, and I know you said you don't like paper. I have an old-fashioned paper planner, five-year paper planner, gives everybody anxiety to see it. They're like, “Is that a five-year planner to lay it out?” Yeah, it's like a trifold. It looks like a trapper keeper. My friends at work are like, “Is that a trapper keeper from like the 90's?” I'm like, “No, but it looks like one.” And I actually love the nostalgia, but I lay it out, and people—I go to these business meetings and people look at me and I'm like, “This doesn't make me any less professional because I use paper, that's how my brain works. Like my brain works differently than your brain.” So, I love to put things on paper, I love to make notes. I have Post-it notes all over my office and my house and it just, it works. I think that people should study, do business, and live in a way that works for you. Yeah, because I did that in the beginning, I tried to kind of conform to this, what I thought a business lady needed to be. And I think it even actually maybe set me back a few months of progress because I was like, “I have to do what everybody else is doing and the way everybody else is doing it and it doesn't work, it doesn't work great.”

CB: Yeah so, I'm going to need that planner!

KH: Absolutely.

CB: I would just like to ask this question. Is there—if there's one piece of advice for someone either going into the profession of nursing or going into business or just overall for women going into their career, do you have any specific advice you would like to give?

KH: Oh, I think you're the second person in a different interview that's asked me that and I can't remember the exact response I gave last time. But off the cuff just kind of feeling it in real time, I think if I had asked somebody that question, I would have wanted somebody to say to me, “If you don't try it you will—you literally never know how it will pan out.” And I think we're so afraid of failure and we don't use it as—we don't restructure it. We don't call it a learning opportunity or an obstacle or a different way for success. And I think had I had somebody phrase it to me like that, it wouldn't have taken me seven years. I would have done that as a new grad, maybe one or two years out of the gate instead of, “I'm not good enough, it'll never be big enough, I'll never be able to work for myself, I'll never have an intern, I'll never be invited to

expos.” You know? And, I really want to, and I say this to a lot of my clients, but I want to say it to a lot of the younger women that I hope listen to this someday, I want you to be inspired, and educated, and motivated to do the ideas in your head that you think will make a difference. Because from experience I can tell you, and I am only officially two years into this, but in two years I have been laughed at, I have been mocked, and don't get me wrong I've had a lot of support, but when you do something to try to break the mold, it is like... I work in an intensive care unit where western medicine is so scrutinized and followed to a tee. And we still do things in western medicine that we didn't 60 years ago, but research is changing and you know these people don't want to hear suggestions or other modalities of health or other plans of care, and it's frustrating. So, I had this one side where people were—didn't take me seriously in the western world. And then I had these people in the holistic world who were like, “You can't be part of us. You work in it, you work at the bedside every day, you listen to these people. You do exactly what you're preaching not to do.” And I think you know if you get your arm cut off, you get hit by a bus, you need western medicine. You need to go to the hospital, and you need to be seen by a doctor, have lifesaving medications. I think we just do a terrible job at preventative health and wellness and overall maintenance of chronic disease, not only in this country but in the world. But a lot of other countries are getting it right and again I've kind of digressed from what you've asked me. But I am very passionate about it because if I can inspire the next person to just do a fraction of what I want to accomplish, I think—and it's the—I picture it like this big snowball effect like a big map. If everybody inspired somebody to do one thing that they were passionate about, think of how much better the world would be. And I hope I live to see that, really I do, truly.

CB: Thank you, thank you for sharing all of that. I guess the last question, kind of in terms of like the business side of your job, anything like that, do you have any regrets? I know we talked a little bit about it earlier, but just overall, anything?

KH: I think, and you guys probably know just sitting here listening to me chat with you, I am a very passionate person. And I was raised by two parents that did a really good job of telling me to speak my mind and to project. And I think it gets me in trouble sometimes because I am so passionate, I am so off the cuff. Being a good businessperson is part of being able to, like I said, the customer service piece, check your emotions. All those things I do think, and I do regret not being able to take things personally sometimes, or to stop and think before I answer a question. And I tried to do that in this interview with you guys. You know, I wanted very heartfelt, but very real and raw answers. But I didn't want to just answer the first thing that came to mind because sometimes when you're very candid with people, you don't know what you're going to get. And to people who are not used to that, it can be very scary. And there was a tactful way to do that, there's a very tactful way to do that. I think as I age gracefully, I try to remind myself every day to do better, be better than the last day. You know, there's a lot of control, your emotions control your thoughts. Think positively. It's a lot of work to be a woman in 2023, and

no matter what people will say—and I think this woman's project, it is fantastic and I can't wait to hear mine. And I listened to a couple on the website already and hear other people's stories. And I just think that people always want to talk about how much better it is, but they don't talk about how hard it is and it is very hard. And I just I want to be better and not have regrets going forward about how people perceive women. Because I think it's a lot of responsibility to be a woman and represent—and that's why I said to you I don't want to, I cannot speak for all women. We are all very different. That's what makes us very special, and we all bring something to the table. But I think people should start talking about how it is in business, in life, in the workplace, in motherhood, that's huge. I do a lot of work in my small business—I work with a lot of moms. And I am not a mother, I do not have children. I don't know at this point in my life if I, if I want to have children. That's something that I go back and forth with myself. But watching these amazing powerhouse women run households, run businesses, work, some of them do literally all of that and then have three kids under the age of eight years old. And then they come to me and they say basically what you just said to me, kind of, “How do you do it all? How do you have the energy, where are the hours in the day?” And they always feel like they're not enough. And I'm here to tell you, “You're enough. You are enough, and I don't want people to be regretful.”

CT: Yeah, would you consider yourself successful?

KH: I think success is, this is my tired brain, what's the word I'm looking for? What's the term when you're up to interpretation, it's an interpretive term, right? So, I think what you might consider successful, I might not consider successful. Some people think success is, you know, a Fortune 500 company and a glass office in New York City overlooking Central Park. To me success is supporting the thing that you asked me, the things I love to do, travel, family, nutrition, sports, you know the loves of my life, and then being able to help people, and to make a living doing it, but not killing myself. And I think it goes back to the whole money isn't everything. I think—and I did a post on this yesterday—I had a photo taken of me at the expo and it just—I did a wellness expo at my alma mater. And I happened to be right where they put me, I was right under the Worcester State University banner. Just funny, because it was State College my first year, there wasn't even a university. I'm dating myself, and I was under the banner, and I had an intern take a photo of me. And after the whole event had wrapped up and I went home and I took a nap because then I had to go to work, which I don't usually do all that on one day, just was the way it worked out. And by the time I sat down and really looked at the photos, I was so humbled and I had said, “If I could tell myself 10 years ago I would be back right here in the same school in the state, well the gym wasn't there, but in this brand new Wellness Center that was being built with scaffolding when I graduated, that I would be here talking to these people, educating people, handing out my business cards, signing people up for, you know, my health and nutrition coaching, I wouldn't have believed you. I'm very candid with you ladies. When you start a business, it's not successful from the get-go. I'm not a profitable

business yet. I don't pay myself yet, technically. I bank a lot of this money and I put it back into the business, which is what you do the first couple of years. But I pay all my bills, I get to travel, I do what I love, I'm a good cat mom, I think, and I, so I would consider myself successful, yes. And do I think I've hit the ceiling? No way. No way. I think in 10 more years, I'll look back and I'll be like, "I'll get a reminder that I did that. I posted this by this link to this interview, and I'll be like I remember when I sat with Catherine squared in that interview." And I wish I could tell myself 10 more years from now, and it'll be—then it'll be nostalgic even then. But I think there's a lot more success to come.

CB: Great, thank you. Questions for you, just a couple. I did have one question. So, a lot of people when they do choose professions or anything like that, a lot of times they'll come from personal stories. Has anything in regard to difficulties of health with you, your family, anything like that has that gotten you to where your profession was? I know you mentioned a lot about your mom and grandmother.

KH: Yes, they talked a lot at the table about things in life. My mother was an OB [obstetrics] nurse, so I only grew up really kind of immersed in that, and I knew right off the bat I didn't want to do that. But I thought the whole concept was very neat. I wanted a job that I could help people, I could make a decent living, and I wasn't going to be replaced by a machine. And I think I was kind of on that tangent earlier to tell you guys. I thought I wanted to be a couple of other things. And my mom said, "Why don't you go to nursing school, because you could sit behind a desk and never touch anybody. You could do health informatics, or work in a bed management, or something like that." I have an aunt who works in the Cardiac ICU in Connecticut who literally cracks chests at the bedside. And they do open heart surgery on these people, and I was just so fascinated that there was a degree that allowed such flexibility. I lost track of your question, oh, that shaped me. Yes, so, hearing all that I said, "Well, I'm going to go to nursing school because there's going to be something for me, I will find something." And as I did my rotations and as I got exposed to this world, I was fascinated, and I was like I don't want to do anything else. Which was funny, because I had said that for 10 years, and then people were like, "But now you're a health coach." And I said, "Well, I'm not your average health coach and nutrition coach." I said, "I do a lot more than that because I combined my two passions together." I said, "How many of you know health and wellness questions? Do you know? And there are a lot more of us now." There are a lot of nurses going into this field because I think a lot of people are seeing the disconnect at the bedside. I can tell you that was a huge thing for me. You can only kick, and scream, and bang your head against the wall so much before you have to say, "I'm either going to live this way and I have to be quiet and suffer or I'm going to be the change." So, I said, "I'm going to be the change." And I still get laughed at. I just talked to a patient the other day who was like, "I got really bad allergies." Did you know—she's in our ICU and I'm like, "You should really get some local honey from where you live and take that every day in the springtime. It'll really help your allergies." And my friend is like, "Are you really telling this woman who like just got examined today?" And I was like, "She's going to remember

that now and a couple months from now when it's allergy season, she's going to be like, "I remember that nurse." So, you know, it's all, it's all relative but all circles back, it all circles back. But yeah, no, I just—I don't have this, I guess this very glamorous life. I wasn't in a car accident, and I wasn't injured, but I have IBS [Irritable Bowel Syndrome] and that really kind of shaped the, not so much the nursing part, the business part. I was miserable growing up. I was always like a little bit underweight, and I had nervous bowel movements and habits all the time, and it affected my quality of life. And, I was like, "There's got to be something besides medication that I can do to fix this." And that kind of started that whole thing. So, I think that's where the passion resonates with my business because that's very personal to me, where the nursing was a means of survival, that just turned into this great career, really. Yeah, and then just following off of all that...

CB: I know earlier you were talking about like the holistic or western approach. Anything like that are you a part of, any either communities, or work groups, or anything like that that kind of focuses on these approaches, any political standpoints you'd like to mention during this interview?

KH: I'm going to keep politics out of it since it's going to be archived forever. But, I am a new member of the chamber of commerce. I think they do great things. I did graduate as a Sigma Theta Tau National Nursing Honor Society member. I think they do great things for nurses. I'm in the American Nurses Association, I was a member of them for a very long time, I didn't recently renew. There's just a lot of great communities out there that will support you if you're looking for something specific. As far as nutrition goes, there's not a really big one that I can think of off the bat that I belong to. I belong to a lot of smaller groups. It's more like communal groups than corporations. I think that's about it yeah.

CT: Are you religious at all?

KH: I grew up Catholic. My mother had my sister and I in church. We made our confirmations, we sang in the church choir, which is another where my love of singing came. I just think that I struggle with organized religion, and a lot of the politics in it. Yeah, so as I've aged, I've kind of fell out of that practice. I consider myself spiritual. I do think there is a higher power, I do think people need to believe in something other than themselves. I think that's really like a key piece to health and I've seen it. I've seen prayer really work and people and there are studies on it. I mean people can heal themselves with prayer. I do think some other religions have it better than others, but I myself do not practice any specific religion.

CB: So, we're kind of at the conclusion of this interview. Is there any other information that you would like our listeners to know about you, about your work?

KH: I just want people to know that if you are struggling with your health, there are options for you. Research is always changing. If this is current, and I know this is going to be archived, if you're listening and you need to be pointed in the right direction, I am an evidence-based, holistic nutrition coach. That is my specialty. But if—and I do free consults, you can find information about us at a betterpathtowellness.com or find us on any of my social media pages. I do free consults and what I pride myself on is that if I cannot help you, I don't take on anybody that we do not feel like I can help. I will point you in the right direction of people that can because the great thing that has happened to me since I started doing this, is that I have met some of the most amazing people. I have functional medicine physician friends, I have naturopath friends, I have friends that practice acupuncture, herbal medicine, licensed massage, that just goes so much further than that with intricate parts of the body. And if I do a consult with you and I feel like you need more help than I can provide, I make referrals to these people and I don't just leave you. I want to put you in the hands of somebody that can. There are a lot of people out there that really care about people's health and that are not looking to just make money off of you, and I really want people to know that and it's—you have to search for them. People are censored. People that do what I do and what a lot of other holistic people do are censored because people are afraid. And when I say people are afraid, it's people in power, and people of government, they can't make money off of you when you try to heal yourself. You know, outside of big corporation things, I don't want to name any names, but you know, and I think I hope, like I said, the trends are saying holistic health and nutrition and integrative medicine in the next five to 10 years are going to explode and I think when that happens, there's going to be too many of us for them to censor. Until that time, I just want to give people hope that there are places and people out there that want to support you. So, that's what I want people to know.

CB: Great, well thank you so much for joining us today. I know you really inspired me as a woman and who is growing up in this world like you have reached a lot of like my goals that I hope to achieve one day. Yeah so, you have inspired me that way.

CT: Yeah, no I agree with her 100%.

KH: It was a pleasure, ladies, thank you. I have never—I've done a lot of podcasts and things, but this formal interview was a first for me. I'll remember it forever.