

Inspiring Women

Episode 1: Chelsea Pauga

Laurie McGraw:

Welcome to Inspiring Women with Laurie McGraw. I am your host, Laurie McGraw. I have spent the past 30 years in leadership and over the years I've come to learn one thing, women need women and not just any women, but inspiring women. Tune in every week to hear from women at the pinnacle of their careers and from others who are just starting out. Episodes can be found at inspiringwomen.show, or subscribe on your favorite podcast app. Thanks for listening and I hope you will be inspired.

Laurie McGraw:

We are here today with our first episode of Inspiring Women, and Inspiring Women is intended to be a podcast where we have the opportunity to speak with both women who are at the early stages of their careers, how they got there, questions that they might have to help them along their career journeys, as well as the opportunity to speak with women who are very inspiring and have much success in their careers.

Laurie McGraw:

I'm really excited today to begin a conversation with Chelsea Pauga. Now, in all fairness, Chelsea is my daughter, so she is inspiring. She is a phenomenal young woman, she is at the early stages of her career. Chelsea has a degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in environmental studies. She spent a couple years working in a Chicago based environmental consulting firm. She is now at the University of Chicago studying public policy in environmental policy. Chelsea, welcome to Inspiring Women.

Chelsea Pauga:

Thank you. I'm very excited to be on this first episode.

Laurie McGraw:

Great. Well, Chelsea, you are inspiring to me, you always have been, so let's just start a quick conversation here. I gave a little bit about your background, but why don't you just tell us what are you doing right now in your career, in your profession, what you're studying.

Chelsea Pauga:

Right now as you mentioned, I'm a master's student in public policy at the University of Chicago. Frankly, in terms of a career or a job, I am not doing anything right now. I am actively seeking out internship and job opportunities in connection with my degree, but do not currently have anything to be perfectly frank, mainly being a student, but just taking the time to learn, take a new career path, learn about policy economics, statistics, all that good stuff.

Laurie McGraw:

After college, you spent a couple of years doing consulting work, what inspired you to take a different path? Why did you go back to school after already having an excellent job right out of college?

Chelsea Pauga:

Well, with my background in environmental studies, honestly, the industry is changing a lot, it evolves constantly. It produces a lot of new opportunities and the job that I had while a good first step out of college, it just wasn't all that intellectually stimulating, it was very rote, definitely a really good experience in terms of what working in the private sector would be like, how to manage all the different responsibilities, but it certainly wasn't for me after several years of doing it, I really just felt the need to do something that required a bit more intellectual stimulation, something that was constantly changing, so policy is certainly a good area for that.

Laurie McGraw:

A lot of people when they come out of school, they get that first job and they learn a lot from it, and then they decide to do something different, so that sounds just like what you chose to do. As you're in it, you're in this public policy learning at the University of Chicago, what are you thinking about doing next? Do you have a vision of what you think your future looks like?

Chelsea Pauga:

Do I know what I'm going to do next? No. My program's only two years so I do want to be very intentional about how I use my time in the program and really take advantage of all of the opportunities that the university can help provide in terms of networking opportunities, exploring internships, connections within the program. I don't know what I'm doing next, but in terms of having a vision about maybe what I would want to do in the future in Chicago, especially there's a lot of opportunities to explore a lot of intersectional policy areas. The stuff that I'm really interested in with in environmentalism has a lot more to do with social justice, healthcare infrastructure, those issues that are arising more and more rather than the development of clean energy. I'm way more interested in environmental justice, so very vaguely I would like to find somewhere within Chicago where I can make a difference and where I can fill that role. Frankly, I'd just like to find a career that values me intellectually and something that I'm excited about working on.

Laurie McGraw:

In thinking about that, Chelsea, we're in a pandemic, it's been a really big year, social injustice, racial injustice, structural racism, some of what you're thinking about influenced by what's happened over the past year, has that always been a passion? What are you thinking about there?

Chelsea Pauga:

It's definitely been influenced by the past year. I had already been exposed to some of these topics really early on in my undergraduate degree, and frankly, it was something that I had never heard about. When you hear about environmental issues, that is not something that I hear talked about often. People often are confused when I first bring it up, but then once I start talking about it a little bit more, especially because of how prevalent it has been in this past year, people really

understand where I'm coming from, especially within the pandemic and people my age, having a lot more honest and open conversations about it, it fires me up, it makes me more excited to think about and talk about these issues and they're difficult, they're confusing, they're really hard. They're really difficult things to feel like you're making an active positive contribution towards, so I just feel like because there's so much work to be done there, it's something that I can be really excited about.

Laurie McGraw:

Well, it sounds like you found something and it also sounds like you're fired up about it, so you do sound really passionate and it's great to know that you're taking the learning of the past year and applying it towards something. Chelsea, when I speak to people your age, you're in your twenties, you're newly married, you're starting things out, even when you're really passionate about something, oftentimes people can be nervous about what's coming next. As a young professional with some ideas of what you want to do, what are you nervous about? What are you thinking about in terms of job prospects, career development after you get out of school?

Chelsea Pauga:

The things that I'm definitely worried about are accurately knowing my value. I feel fortunate that I actually do have quite a bit of confidence in who I am as a person and what I can bring to the table, but how do I accurately assess that, and how do I use those abilities and use my strengths, not only to do the best job that I can, but also to have a career that I'm interested in doing? Not something where I'm just going in and doing it and I'm good at it, which was how I felt about my last job, I was good at it and competent and that's all well and good, but it wasn't all that fulfilling.

Chelsea Pauga:

Not only just knowing my value intellectually, but also financially knowing my value and how do I have difficult conversations and ask for more money or ask for a raise or ask for a salary if I don't even fully understand the context of the question of, how do I actually know what to ask for?

Chelsea Pauga:

That's definitely something I'm nervous about, I get very nervous about any of those difficult conversations that might arise as a result of that. I also really worry about stagnating, just getting something after this degree and then maybe just not actively seeking anything new, not reaching out, not making new opportunities because frankly that stuff requires effort, and I don't want to stop putting in the effort once I feel maybe comfortable.

Laurie McGraw:

Well, have you had any of those opportunities so far Chelsea? When you first started out, did you negotiate your first salary at your first job or did you just take what was offered to you?

Chelsea Pauga:

I did not negotiate my salary, I just took what was offered to me, frankly, because it was a very small company, luckily the conversations were a little bit easier to have in terms of raises down

the line, but they weren't very structured, quite honestly it didn't feel all that professional, they just felt a lot more casual just because of the nature of a smaller company and just wasn't working for a large corporation. It's definitely conversations that I have not had.

Laurie McGraw:

It sounds like you're going to have plenty of opportunities to have those conversations in the future, so being prepared and whether it is a large company or a small company, going in with some idea of what you expect is always a good place to start. But Chelsea, as we talked to other guests on Inspiring Women, I'll make sure to ask those questions from women who have been through that over the course of their careers.

Laurie McGraw:

I'll tell you what, it really does sound like you are already on a track to do some really amazing work Chelsea, and I say that as your mother, as somebody who gets a lot of her own inspiration from seeing the passion and what you apply to everyday.

Laurie McGraw:

Thanks so much for being our first guest here, Chelsea, on Inspiring Women. This has just been really terrific, and as folks want to follow your career journey, where can they find you?

Chelsea Pauga:

You can find me as Chelsea Pauga on LinkedIn, or if you ever wanted to reach out to me on Instagram, I am also at Chelsea.Pauga on Instagram.

Laurie McGraw:

Well, I know I'll be following Chelsea, so thanks so much for a great conversation, again, we'll see more episodes on the Inspiring Women website, and it's been a great discussion today. Thanks so much.

Chelsea Pauga:

Thank you. I really appreciate it.

Laurie McGraw:

This has been an episode of Inspiring Women with Laurie McGraw. Please subscribe, rate, and review. We are produced by Kate Kruse at Executive Podcast Solutions. More episodes can be found on inspiringwomen.show. I am Laurie McGraw and thank you for listening.