

January 20, 2020

Notes – Laura Smith talk show host “The Way Home” on WLS Chicago

Laura’s journey in radio started in 1996 as a DJ, while she balanced being a single Mom. She moved in 2006 to talk radio with “Above and Beyond” on Sirius and then to WABC New York until 2019. In early 2019, Laura started her show “The Way Home” which consists of inspirational stories. She truly believes that “whatever your desire or dream, it is there because you have it!”

Laura believes that skill, desire and intention are important. In addition, networking brings great opportunities. She met Rich Henkels through her cousin who spoke very highly of Rich. Rich made an impression on him. Her advice is “Be nice because you are. It’s a small world with a small circle, so it’s important to make good impressions and keep connections.”

Relationships are important, and Laura is sensitive to encouraging positive ones. Therefore, she does not allow politics on her show. Her goal is to be part of the human family and not divide. She is interested in the human stories which inspire with great, memorable messages. She does admit, however, that it is important to be true to who you are. We should all be ok and know that we are enough! After 15 years of nervousness in the radio business she finally believed she was enough and never needed notes for an interview again!

#### Words of Importance

**Innovative** – reinvent and be creative! Because of the pandemic, Laura now broadcasts her show from Indiana and not New York.

**Flexibility** – Live performers have to think on their feet, so know you are enough and be flexible!

**Resilience** – It is important for all aspects of life!

**Inspirational** – We all can be and seek inspiration! Laura’s goal is to be inspired everyday by finding magic, hope and spirituality. She can talk to anyone and find their specialness.

Laura has significant voiceover experience. Most notably, her voice is the voice heard on the Geico phone message system. Once a month, she records new material and has been doing this for 7 years. Laura believes that voiceover skills are an art form and should we want to break into the animation side of voiceover, we should have 50 unique voices. Laura tells that you must be a good storyteller who comes across as real. Reading other people’s stories helps to understand what is needed. Her personal experience came from meeting the very successful Mel Blanc (Looney Tunes voices) in college. She said he was funny, joyful and made her want to do voiceover even though back then voiceover was seen as a sellout for those who could not make it in the theatre.

There used to be a small group of voiceover actors who booked jobs. Today there is a lot of competition. At one point in her past, Laura dated a voiceover artist who told her not to bother because of the competition. Laura admits, “inside I said watch me.” Even her theatre teacher

told her that she had the worst voice. She felt knocked down, but it was in her heart to try. So Laura took a high school voiceover course, made a demo tape and worked on her voice for 10 years. She emphasizes the need for confidence when interpreting. The voice must be convincing! It is a humbling profession that builds resiliency. Learn to trust your voice! Later in life, Laura saw that same theatre teacher and told him that she works in radio 😊

As a result of having talk show guests, Laura also became a spokesperson. Her interviews included selling the vendors' products. Afterward the vendor would want to advertise during her show. Balance of Nature was an example she gave. They became a weekly sponsor, and she is now a spokesperson.

Laura's path did not include an agent. She actually got into lite FM radio in NYC without an agent! She says that "I never gave up and believed I had talent."

#### Examples of stories that stick out for her

1. Jimmy Wayne – country singer who was abused as a child and grew up in foster care. He wrote a book and has been on her show 3 times.
2. Amish girl who left the Amish behind and started her own coffee roasting company. She now sells all over the world.
3. #1 bourbon maker. His grandfather started the business and was very inspirational.

Laura loves stories that thrill her. She says that we all have our own stories and need the self-esteem to share them. It took her 40 years to have a sense of who she is even though she had an interesting background.

Laura passionately believes that the ability to make people laugh is magical, and that everyone is special. "You have to believe it and be confident!" She always wanted to be on stage, but it took her until she was in her 30's to appreciate not only where she came from but also who she is. Through the years she has become spiritual and emphasizes "You have to love yourself and work on what you don't like!"

Anyone interested in having Laura listen to their demo tape may send her an email