

Thinking Outside the Bud

Episode 420 - Debi Wimberley

<https://www.thinkingoutsidethebud.com/podcast/empowering-health-debi-wimberleys-journey-with-medical-cannabis-and-the-vision-behind-effective-cannabis-newsletter>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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Bruce Eckfeldt

Welcome, everyone. This is thinking outside the bud. I'm Bruce Eckfeldt. I'm your host. Our guest today is Debbie Wimberly. She is founder at the effective cannabis newsletter. We're going to talk about the world of cannabis in terms of what do we know? What do we not know? How do people get information? Cannabis is an interesting kind of industry because we're still evolving, we're still learning. There's a lot of science going on. There's lots of research going on, about what cannabis really does, how it works, how to use it, what effects it's having, and really kind of evolving the industry and you know, new patients coming in new users coming in people using cannabis and kind of finding new kind of applications and where it's going both kind of medically, socially, culturally, etc. So excited to have this conversation kind of hear W story and what she's learned what they're doing today, and some new exciting kind of collaborations and partnerships they have. So with that, Debbie, welcome to the program. Hi, Bruce.

Debi Wimberley

Thank you very happy to be here.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, it's a pleasure. Before we get into everything you're doing the newsletter and what's going on today. We'd love to get a little background. I'm just curious how you got into cannabis. How do you do start a newsletter give us a little backstory?

Debi Wimberley

Well, I got into cannabis. Because I'm a patient. I found myself being abandoned by my doctors during the opiate crisis. And so I needed to find an alternative. And this was back in 2015. So I decided to give this a try because I have lived in chronic pain for over three decades. Yeah,

Bruce Eckfeldt

I guess how did cannabis come up as a potential solution? Like, where did you learn about it? Like, what was your introduction to it?

Debi Wimberley

Well, I learned about cannabis in the late 70s, when I was working in the cancer field, working with two amazing doctors that we were trying to get access to it for patients just to deal with pain and to provide sleep not knowing that it could do what no now, and of course, that was absolute taboo was not going to happen, no matter what we tried to but we did have patients that used it behind the scenes, and we could see that it was beneficial. And so I learned a lot because I didn't learn anything about cannabis, the plant itself, or anything through my medical training. So when I met these two doctors, it was truly amazing to be able to hear them talk about this. And it was a little bit mind blowing, because of course I grew up to the 60s. And

Bruce Eckfeldt

yeah, I guess what was the thinking? Or what it was the understanding around how cannabis worked? Or what cannabis could do, I guess, what level of understanding do we have? You know, back then? Well,

Debi Wimberley

I was fortunate enough that one of the doctors was from India. And so of course, they have a much better understanding of this plant and that time. And so he was very frustrated coming to the US as a doctor and having access to plant medicine, basically. And being able to apply it. The other doctor was from the US. And so they were a great team working together to try to understand this. But the obstacles we kept running up against were pretty tremendous. Yeah, I can

Bruce Eckfeldt

imagine. So then how did you get from that experience to the newsletter,

Debi Wimberley

I started building the effective cannabis business in 2016, I found myself fighting for my life in a hospital, being forced off of opioids and the middle of the flu and having some East London diction. And when I came back to my senses and could read for myself, I said, I've got to do something to make sure no one ever finds himself in this place. And so I just started looking at how to build research and understand how cannabis actually is helping patients with chronic pain. And little did they know that it was going to lead me to helping me with my lungs as well. But I also have learned since 2016, people need education. So that's when I decided that I would start the effective Canvas newsletter was a collaborative project. And I've actually been certified as a certified Canvas coach, educator, but he also took all the courses that you take to become a contender, a dispensary, a grow, how to advocate for cannabis. Because if we want to make change in how this works, we have to understand how all the systems

Bruce Eckfeldt

working. Yeah. And so I mean, tell me a little bit of what you learned in those programs. Like, I guess, what was interesting to you, what did you learn what's been applicable, like, as you've kind of really gotten to this industry?

Debi Wimberley

I think what's really interesting is that we're still very far behind in times, we're still not moving forward the way that we should. I think we're still focusing on some very outdated research. And no new research is coming. But we are now trying to take on terminology and try to change the way we talk about this plant. And in general, as far as the newsletter and as far as educating about medical cannabis and just trying to figure out how to change the mindset. And then the business side of it is they aren't as focused on the medical side as I think they should be. They're just focused on the plant, bringing good plant to prop to the table. and getting it out the door. And one thing I can tell anybody that's in this industry, if you provide the product that your patients need, they'll come back and see you time after time. Yeah.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. I mean, do you feel like there's always a friction or kind of competition between kind of medical programs and recreational programs and states? Know that

Debi Wimberley

I feel though, and I think that what I find is that everybody is just on this real high to get money and make money is growing. And I also think, because it's in the United States, it's federally illegal, that doctors find it. They don't have any education around it. So I keep hearing, it's just difficult. It's hard. It's just recreational. So this is where the mindset comes, where the newsletter comes in and creating content that you could actually be in to doctor and say, here's something that you can read, if you wouldn't mind to see if it might help change your mind. Yeah.

Bruce Eckfeldt

So I guess tell me about the newsletter, like, how did you originally kind of approach the newsletter, you mentioned that it's a collaborative effort, like, I guess, how did it originally kind of start up?

Debi Wimberley

That's a really interesting question, because I was in the middle of becoming a certified cannabis educator. And I just threw out in the champ one day, because everybody that's in this industry struggles because we can't advertise, we can do all the normal things that a business can do. So I just throw it in the chat one day, why don't we create a collaborative newsletter and see how far we can expand it. And so I was surprised how many people jumped on board with that and was interested in so they know certain things, well, we need to make this more of a business. Because I'd already been trying grant effective cannabis for six years, and trying to grow your business is really hard by yourself. And I started realizing it's gonna take collaborative, if we're gonna really make the inground movement that we need to change this and make medical cannabis, the medicine that it really is and making it access to everyone. That really,

Bruce Eckfeldt

yeah. So tell me about some of the earlier collaborators like Who did you have on I guess, what did you find as being kind of the synergy? Did you Was it hard to kind of fill in the gaps? Like, how did you put together the collaboration?

Debi Wimberley

It's pretty amazing process. Of course, I went back to a lot of the people that I trained with and asked them if they would participate and contribute content. And they said, Yes, I you know, Dr. Grinspoon has contributed articles to our newsletter, Miyagi shells, Riley deeper, Dr. Blair, and we have those. And then we have a lot of cannabis coaches and educators that are the ones were the ones behind the scenes, building the newsletter, putting it together writing content, we're starting new partnerships. This year, we're also running a program with one of the universities here in a pharmaceutical school, running a beta test of providing them with a newsletter. Because one of the things that we do is we take the research, which is the science and the anecdotal evidence, and we're trying to put it all together just so that all supports what's happening with the patient, what's happening within the medical system, so that we can fully see it. Because in my situation, I'm 65. And I have serious health issues. I don't have time to wait for us to decide we're going to make this legal, and that we're going to really do the research. I need to keep this medicine in my system all the time. And so we have to keep looking this forward.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. So tell us a little bit about the early days and newsletter in terms of how did you get, you know, subscribers get traction, get distribution, what did you learn? How did that play out?

Debi Wimberley

One of the cool things I decided to do was to create landing pages for everybody. We have a tool that's called an E CNN. And so when you become an ECN advocate, we create a landing page that you can send out to anybody that you want, and they sign up but everybody has their group people that are signed up to the newsletter. And so if you have 30 signups and I have 30, signups now the newsletters go into 60 people, and so you're reaching a new audience, every time. And so now we have reached almost 500 subscribers, which I have that small, but that's pretty amazing. And it gives period today is our one year anniversary of launching a newsletter. And we're reaching. We're reaching Great Britain. We're reaching India. We're reaching around the world. This Yeah. And everybody that signs up, they want it. They're signing up for the information. Yeah. So helping businesses in the cannabis industry is really important. And because one person can't do this by themselves,

Bruce Eckfeldt

yeah. What are you noticing about the people that are signing up? Are there any patterns, kind of anything that you see in the data?

Debi Wimberley

It's really interesting. It's just wide variety is everybody its moms that stands it So yeah, they have to be over 18. It's seniors, interesting. It's parents that have kids that have health conditions, and they want to know more about it, and they don't know where to go. And then we have a lot of just, you know, people that are in the cannabis industry that want to know.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. And so tell us more about the content that you're actually putting out? Like, how do you make decisions about what you're going to include? How much do you include, like, tell us a little bit about how you put together one of your newsletters.

Debi Wimberley

Every month, we have one broad topic. And so within that broad topic, we'll just use chronic pain to that very first issue. We just said chronic pain, so anything can fall into that. And so we have a content meeting once a month, and we everybody can come in, and we talk about the different types of content that can be contributed to that article. And then they create their content, submit it, and then we have an editing team that it has gone through we make sure it's vetted. We make sure it's properly cited. And all the information is correct.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. What are some of the other topics you've covered over the hump, just finished

Debi Wimberley

up our advocacy and stigma issue in December, which was a very powerful issue, and made me realize we have a whole lot more to go in that respect that we've done. Chronic pain, healthy lungs, healthy gut, healthy brain, mental health, harm and reduction, skin and topicals acute care. That's not something that most people think about how you can use cannabis for acute care, but it's very helpful. So we did. And we produced 107 pieces of content and 2023. That's

Bruce Eckfeldt

amazing. So you mentioned a couple of places where you're getting content, but like, what are your content sources? How have you kind of approached, you know, enrolling people or getting sources for content that you then evaluate,

Debi Wimberley

where you're constantly putting the message out, we're looking for doctors that want to participate with us pharmacist. But we're also looking for that anecdotal story, we've created this amazing tool where we ask you nine questions about your story. And then once we get it, we create it into a beautiful blog. And it becomes the first time the story of how cannabis is helping you. And it also tells how you got there, what any obstacles you've had to approach. And then if we feel like there's a piece of content that we ran across out there that we really like, will go and approach them and use them if we can use it. One of the really cool things about the newsletters, everything is in the newsletters behind the wall. So we don't run into any complications. And so if you've created content, and you want to use it on your website, and this is one of the ways we help businesses grow, as you're just putting on your website, so we are not against using friendship that you've created URLs, or something new that you want to create. Interesting,

Bruce Eckfeldt

I guess, what's the underlying business model? Like? How do you I guess, what is the cost basis? Are you making money? Like what are you, I guess what it's a goal, and what's the model for the business financially, it's

Debi Wimberley

very hard to make money. It's just not easy. I've been funding this letter by myself. Yeah. And it does cost to become an ACN advocate, but then that you get priority to your articles being in the newsletter, get your own landing page, so you can build your clientele. And within that, we then teach you how to bring the clientele to your website. Without any complications, we have a whole reason behind what we do. And then this year,

we're starting the whole piece about defining terminology. So we're putting community together and doctor, scientist and educators together to do that. So we have lots of opportunities that are coming in this year, to where if you're an MCN advocate, you can really grow and get your name out there.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, I guess what does success look like? Like? Where do you hope to be in a couple of years? Like, do you have any metrics or targets or ambitions for having impact? What does that look like for you?

Debi Wimberley

My mission has been since the day came up with the idea to be the leaders in medical cannabis. And it means it takes all of us. One person knows everything there is to know about cannabis and how to address your health. Yeah. And we need everybody working as a collaborative. Yeah, right. Now, if you go to look up anything on cannabis, you don't know how accurate it is. You don't know how old it is. I was looking at some YouTube channels the other day, and there's some information out there that's really out of date, because it was four or five years ago. And we continue to learn about cannabis and how it can help your health and life and how it engages. And so those pieces of content don't get updated. And so if the right or the wrong person lands on the hand, that's what they're going. And so our goal is to be the leaders and be your turn to you. Whether it be a doctor, a scientist, a pharmacist, or a patient. Yeah, because we want to make sure because like for me, I had to learn this the hard way. it, and I don't think people should have to learn how to do this hard.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Let's minimize the number of people that have to do it the hard way. So,

Debi Wimberley

you know, I think having a resource that you can count on that, you know, is going to be the most up to date, that accurate information is what we're, we're striving to be.

Bruce Eckfeldt

What have been some of the challenges? I mean, sure, there have been many, but like, as you look back over this last year, and kind of think about, like, the things you've had to overcome, like, what are some of the things that have really been either learning experiences or, you know, things that you can share? All right,

Debi Wimberley

brand new system Kajabi, which is not a website system I've ever worked within, so I have to learn. But my team is all volunteer, there is no one works here that makes money. It's an all volunteer team. And surprisingly, we've all survived except for one, which is truly amazing. Yeah. But within that, there becomes you know, we've reached the wall, because there's only so many of us. And so we really do need more access more resources, and we are really pushing forward and we keep having opportunity to fall in our lap. And we have to take it when it comes because they don't, it may not ever come around again. So we're really in the middle of growing pains right now. And trying how to move this forward. And anybody that wants to collaborate and work with us.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, where have you found kind of the biggest support or, you know, help and resources? Like, where is it coming from these days?

Debi Wimberley

I think that once somebody sees our newsletter and reads it and sees what it's doing, we haven't had anyone yet say, Oh, well, that's good. They really do like what we're doing. And you know, when we take a piece of content in the whole team that goes through it, and edits it, and comes up with the right connection, that links and everything, and then it goes to the content creator, and they get to feed back in on what it is. So it's really is what you call a collaborative. So it seems like anybody that we've ever asked content, they're always happy to come back and do it again.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. So you mentioned a couple of episodes that you've put out or a couple of the issues that you've put out any topics that you kind of have in the queue here, things that you're looking to develop content, either you're planning on doing or you'd love to do in the future, like what's on your list of issues? Yeah,

Debi Wimberley

we've decided all the topics for 2020 for this month, of course, we're reflecting and inspiring. But looking back at where we've been over the past year, it's pretty amazing issue. But February, we'll be taking exercise recovery. This is a place where, you know, there's a lot of debates, it seems to be on whether cannabis is really helpful in exercise, and if it's really helpful in recovery, so that we're going to be taking on so we have some really cool interviews and articles that are going to be coming in March, we're doing our premium disease, which is a huge issue. And I believe if we understood our MCS and knew how to take care of it long before we didn't even know, we probably wouldn't have some of these sales conditions. That was Yeah.

Bruce Eckfeldt

I'm curious, like, how much do you get involved in? Or do you feel like it's important to kind of discuss or talk about sort of the regulatory kind of situation. And I know your focus on the medical side, but like how much you get involved in either looking at or advocating for changes in regulatory kind of policy to help with cannabis research, or cannabis education or cannabis use? Like, I guess what comes up for you around those areas? I

Debi Wimberley

think it's huge move to look at all, I don't think we could just ignore all of it. Yeah, yeah, just stay on the medical side. But like I said, getting sick and training and just about everything that I can do learn how to move this point for the education forward. And if you go back and get access to our stigmas, you'll find a lot about that. I don't spend any time in Washington and trying to change their minds. I don't think that's where it's gonna happen. I think that we have to change as a whole when the patients and the individuals start seeing how much this helps and improves your life, the demand will move it forward. But they have to have education. Because I believe anybody that even if you're a recreational user, which I'm totally okay with, if you really learn how to use cannabis correctly for yourself, you will benefit. It is truly a medicine for all of us. And I think it's really important to learn how to do it for the best for you. I just did a TED talk. And it just released and I got speak to high school kids, which I never thought I'd get to do when I was taught that. And that was a goal. I've always set because I think we have to start educating this at a very young age. And it was something I had to alter quite a bit to speak to kids on a team, but I really wanted to address suicide and the issues that we have with

that within our teams and how much role PCs could variable play in that. And I had to back down, so had to come up for the whole nother talk within 24 hours. But you know, we need to be teaching this in our science classes, we need to be teaching this in our colleges, this needs to be being taught everywhere. So, you know, I used to work in the computer industry, and I helped create the networking technology. And so when we first started creating the networking technology, people thought we were crazy. No, you mean, you're gonna talk to a computer in another building? And we're going to talk across the world? And it's like, yes, we're going to and you feel like cannabis is a lot like law and teaching. But the difference is, is we didn't have to fight for access. In this industry, you have to fight for access for everything, banking. So talk about it freely advertise it. And so we really have to make changes across the board. Yeah,

Bruce Eckfeldt

I'm curious, are there any particular policies or, you know, regulatory thing, you know, issues that you're primarily or you feel are super important right now, like, I guess, what are the topics from a regulatory point of view that you really focus on? I think

Debi Wimberley

we have to change it up the educational level. Because once we change it at the educational level, getting it into our universities, and then being open to teaching it is when the real floodgates will probably open. Because, you know, it surprises me how many people that use cannabis today still don't even know the endocannabinoid system. And one of the things I say is if we hadn't learned about the cardiovascular or the respiratory system until the 1990s, and we still were not teaching it today, where would we be as a society because heart and lung is the number one and number two killer in the US and around the world? So I believe your ECS is your most valuable asset to taking care of your health and keeping up?

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, I guess, if you had more relationship with kind of the commercial world of this, like, where do you see partnerships or opportunities of collaborating with kind of for profit organizations, you know, businesses, various kind of parts of the cannabis world? Like, where do you see the opportunity to kind of bring some of your content, bring some of your knowledge your network to help them and vice versa? Oh,

Debi Wimberley

dispensaries and grows, those are the one two places, I think that rows don't fully understand what the patient is looking for. Okay, and what is needed, they just continue to grow whatever the dispensaries demand is. And I think the dispensary has a golden opportunity to work with us and educate the clientele on cannabis and how it can benefit them. Because I think that when people fully understand the benefits of this, they're all on board. And the thing I always say is, if you don't have a medical condition to treat, still never experience what I have. And being able to improve my lungs something that most people don't ever do. And I just had my second lung skin and all the nodules are gone. My lungs. So you know, I feel like every day, it is my wife. And it has given me the ability to do this. And so when we educate the general public about this, and they can see the benefit that they can get, whether it be anxiety, depression, relaxation, that it can be something as simple to something as big as a lung condition like mine, that when you can feel that you are in control of your health yourself. That's one of the things I talked about is becoming your own health quality advocate and learning to listen to your body and learning to hear the signals that it's sending you. And not just putting all your trust in a doctor.

We still need medical doctors don't get me wrong. But there's so much that they need to be a partner with us as partnering with them. They need to take us seriously and listen to us when we're talking about health.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, I agree. W this has been a pleasure. If people want to find out more about you more about the newsletter, what's the best way to get that information.

Debi Wimberley

And you'll find us on Instagram and LinkedIn at EC newsletter and you can reach us by email at teens@effective.com. And the website is effective.com.

Bruce Eckfeldt

awesome. I'll make sure all the links and handles and everything are in the show notes so people can get that. It's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for taking the time today. Thanks

Debi Wimberley

versus the great pleasure of being here with you

About Eckfeldt & Associates

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