

[0:00:05] **Jeff:**

It's Jeff around town, and I'm talking to my friend **Sonia Carbonell**. Sonia, thanks for chatting on Jeff Around Town.

[0:00:09] **Sonia:**

Thanks, Jeff. Thanks for having me.

[0:00:12] **Jeff:**

Yeah. So we met in the hallway. We're not in the hallway at the CPEX building at UNO. We're actually at Blue Line Coffee, but we have sometimes run into each other there, and I learned you work in the School of Social Work, correct?

[0:00:24] **Sonia:**

Yes, right upstairs from you.

[0:00:27] **Jeff:**

Right upstairs. And I can't remember if you reached out to me or did I—

[0:00:32] **Sonia:**

I saw you walking down the hallway on one of your mini breaks, and you were so kind, because I reached out and I said, "Hi, Jennifer. I'm Sonia, and we have a lot of mutual friends." And you were so kind, and you turned around, and you stopped, and you looked at me, and you spoke with me, and I was just shocked, because I have been wanting to meet you for many years.

[0:01:03] **Jeff:**

Well, that's—you're incredibly kind. And I think the main reason we—well, beyond just becoming friends—but you wanted to share with me some of the work that you're doing, and you are an illustrator, and you are doing wonderful illustrations for kids' books. Do you want to share a little bit about how that all came to be?

[0:01:22] **Sonia:**

Well, like lots of artists, you know, we start when we're real young, you know. I don't know about you, but doodling or copying the Sunday paper.

[0:01:30] **Jeff:**

Oh yeah, remember the Sunday comics?

[0:01:33] **Sonia:**

And I loved it for a while. And then, you know, life happens, and you grow up and you start thinking about other things, and I just kind of didn't do it for many, many years.

[0:01:45] **Sonia (continues):**

And then in my 40s, I decided to pick up the pencil again. I had this real urge to be creative, and it just became a part of me that was ready to evolve. It was ready to start up again.

[0:02:01] **Sonia (continues):**

And then I got started doing little greeting cards for families, for my family members, like for birthdays, holidays. And then I got some really positive feedback. And then kind of went from there.

[0:02:16] **Jeff:**

Yeah, and we're here at the coffee shop, and you ran into someone from your church, at Unity Church, yes. And you did a book, right? Yeah?

[0:02:24] **Sonia:**

For Unity, yeah. Yeah, I've done a couple of things for Unity. I've done a couple of things for other folks that I know, and friends, and some people—small business owners—have come to me to do some work for them. So that's been fun.

[0:02:44] **Jeff:**

I love that idea that you were making cards for family members, because in this world of—

[0:02:46] **Jeff (continues):**

—AI and everything else, not that AI doesn't—not that there isn't, you know, an application for it; it makes for a great tool. But nothing, in my opinion, can replace that human connection.

[0:02:58] **Jeff (continues):**

And you know, like, to receive a handmade card from you—that sounds, that sounds amazing.

[0:03:05] **Sonia:**

Yeah, and it's exciting and so much fun to create, because, you know, their personality, and you can do something really special and unique for them, and they get it, you know. It's nothing they could buy in the store. It's just not quite right.

[0:03:22] **Jeff:**

Yeah, let's go back. You said that you started drawing as a kid, and then you kind of put it aside. And I—that I'm so glad you came back to it.

[0:03:32] **Jeff (continues):**

It kind of breaks my heart, though, that you put it aside. Because, you know, there's that idea that, "Oh, well, okay, that's for kids," or "That's a hobby," or whatever. And look, and it's wonderful that you—you know.

[0:03:44] **Jeff (continues):**

What was that thing that caused you to finally say, "I got to get back to it"?

[0:03:50] **Sonia:**

It was just this really powerful, strong urge within me to create. It was just this craving, this desire, and I always loved it, and it just fills my heart, and it makes me smile and laugh when I do it, you know—come up with interesting little characters, and I can actually giggle and laugh, and nothing else really fulfills me like that.

[0:04:24] **Jeff:**

One of the things that I—besides just loving your work—one of the things that I so appreciate about you, Sonia, as a creative, is that you are open. You came to me saying, "Hey, can I, you know, would you look at my work and maybe give me some feedback?"

[0:04:24] **Sonia:**

Yeah.

[0:04:31] **Jeff:**

And, like, you are so open.

[0:04:35] **Jeff (continues):**

You want to keep getting better.

[0:04:35] **Sonia:**

I do. I want to keep getting better at all the things that I do.

[0:04:40] **Jeff:**

There are those who may not—I don't know—but, like, you are so open to that. And it almost—

[0:04:35–0:04:40] **Jeff (continues):**

—it almost seems to energize you even more, rather than like, “Ah,” but you're like, “Oh!” You seem excited.

[0:04:52] **Sonia:**

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. The couple of times we've gotten together and I've shown you something, and you've made some tips and suggestions—that just filled me with so much more inspiration to run home and work on it and really make it my own, but with the tips and suggestions.

[0:05:00] **Sonia (continues):**

It's just like, “Oh my God, that's exactly what I needed to hear. Thank you.” I do get really excited.

[0:05:00] **Jeff:**

Well, Sonia, thanks for chatting with me. And real quick, how can folks find you or your work—

[0:05:13] **Sonia:**

At soniacartoonart.com. I do have a simple little website and an opportunity for folks to go in and send me emails and let me know if there's something that I can do for you.

[0:05:24] **Jeff:**

Wonderful. Sonia, thanks so much.

[0:05:27] **Sonia:**

Thank you, Jeff.