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PROFILE

Conscious Talk:

Radio That Makes a Difference

by Jon VanZile

About 30 years ago, in three different places, three people unknown to each other were given death sentences by conventional medicine.

Brenda Michaels was diagnosed with cervical cancer in 1975. She fought a 15-year battle with the disease, and it eventually consumed her uterus and both breasts. At one point, she was given mere months to live—even if she followed a toxic regime of chemotherapy.

Around the same time, Rob Spears was going through a depressingly familiar scenario. In 1974, he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He was put on chemotherapy, and before long his health deteriorated to a point where doctors told him he had only months to live.

Across the country, Robin Barbero would soon face her own dark hours. Married, healthy, and successful, 31-year-old Barbero was struck with the Epstein-Barr virus, chronic fatigue syndrome, and gastroparesis (weak stomach). The disease gradually took over her life, robbing her of energy and even the ability to eat. Barbero eventually ended up bedridden with a feeding tube and no official hope of recovery.

Today, however, the three would be unrecognizable to their former, sick selves. Each is healthy and vibrant. Each followed a purely personal journey back to health, rejecting conventional wisdom and embracing the body's ability to heal when given the opportunity.

Marching to a Different Beat

Michaels, Spears, and Barbero began to eat organically, added nutrients and supplements to their diets, changed their outlooks, and took control of their health. Perhaps most important of all, they joined forces to help spread the word.

In 2001, Michaels and Spears, who had met and married after their illnesses, founded a Seattle-based radio program called Conscious Talk Radio. Hosted by the couple, the two-hour program is dedicated to health and wellness. Professionally, creating the program was not a stretch for the couple—Michaels had once hosted her own television show, and Spears had been a writer for both TV and radio.

Two years later, Barbero, whose professional background is media syndication, joined Conscious Talk Radio and helped expand the show to East Coast markets.

From the very first strategy meeting, Conscious Talk Radio positioned itself as an alternative to the corporate-sponsored media that dominate the airwaves. The program is dedicated to the human potential for health, both physically and spiritually.

"We're proponents of natural healing," says Spears. "We believe in giving the body what it needs, and we delve into the emotional and spiritual side of healing, because if you're not emotionally healthy, you're not healthy."

At first, Conscious Talk Radio ran into resistance from more conventional radio stations, even though the show had already attracted national sponsorship. "We knocked on hundreds of closed doors," Spears says.

Finally, however, a door opened, and Conscious Talk Radio went live in Seattle. From there, the show quickly expanded from a two-hour broadcast on Sunday nights to a daily program with a great variety of guest hosts.

On Mondays, for example, guest host Ric Giardina talks about how to operate businesses that are socially, environmentally, and personally conscious, while Madeline Gerwick-Brodeur discusses the importance of "right timing" in business. On Tuesdays, Dr. DiVanna VaDree examines spiritual and emotional healing. Wednesdays are devoted to health and well being, while Thursdays feature guest hosts Bob Barbero and Nick Salamone tackling social and political issues. Fridays feature interviews with



physicians, authors, and leading-edge experts in consciousness.

No matter who the guest host is, Conscious Talk founders Rob and Brenda are never far from the microphone. The three partners in Conscious Talk Radio view the program as a privilege and an opportunity to reach people, rather than a way to enrich themselves.

Practicing What They Preach

In fact, all three partners use their own lives as experiments in living consciously. They eat organically, juice regularly, exercise, support ethical businesses with their consumer dollars, and take supplements and vitamins to ensure their own health and longevity.

“We look at our friends who are suffering from degenerative diseases of aging, and it’s because of lifestyle choices,” Michaels says. “We’ve shifted our priorities, and being healthy is very important to us.”

In addition to regular blood and muscle testing performed by a competent holistic physician, Spears and Michaels drink a “morning drink” of greens and aloe, followed by a supplements regimen that includes coenzyme Q10, vitamin E, essential fatty acids, vitamin C, and glucosamine and chondroitin. They also take 25 mg of DHEA at night. Barbero follows a nutrient regimen that includes a multivitamin, greens, aloe, antioxidants, flax seed oil, fish oil, and DHEA.



Their nutritional regimen is supported by meditation, acupuncture, massage, and, most important, an inner sense of balance and quest to find one’s passion. The partners behind Conscious Talk Radio are clearly people who, in the words of Socrates, live examined lives.

They all suffered a great setback—almost losing their lives to the degenerative illnesses so common in today’s world—and emerged stronger. They looked at the world around them, identified a dangerous emptiness in modern culture, and readjusted their lives to reflect a new internal reality.

Then they dedicated their lives to getting this message out on the airwaves—and they think their timing could not have been better.

“There’s a real shift going on across the planet,” Barbero says. “People are looking for answers. We bring information to them. We help to create forward movement in their lives by offering alternative viewpoints and solutions to current problems.”

Michaels agrees.

“The band-aid solution of treating symptoms for our problems isn’t working anymore,” she says. “It did for a long time, but not anymore. We live in a time and country of bigger, better, faster. But there’s still a place that isn’t filled up, and it will never be filled up with more money, toys, and relationships.”

Indeed, according to their worldview, the old institutions are beginning to show signs of strain. The US health care system, for example, is on the brink of collapse, with more than 40 million Americans lacking health insurance. In response to this crisis, entrenched forces—pharmaceutical companies, vested corporate interests, government agencies—have fought back with misinformation and fear to retain control.

“Many people operate from fear,” Michaels says. “Most institutions are created from fear and the need to protect. So we’re all stressed out and stifled, and people know that.”

Their solution is not to rail against the system or to shout down opposition and inject even more fear into peoples’ lives. Instead, they see Conscious Talk Radio as an opportunity to reintroduce humanism, to change people’s perceptions one at a time, and to put their sponsorship money where their mouths are.

Conscious Talk Radio is very selective about its sponsors. Advertisers are companies that operate ethically and share with the partners certain bedrock principles of environmentalism and social consciousness. In return, they get much more than ad time. They get moral support on the program itself, as well as live interviews and an ongoing presence in the website archives.

“We really want like-minded advertisers,” Barbero says. “We try to stay away from advertisers that aren’t helping the planet and the environment. That’s why we feel

Tuning In to Conscious Talk

Conscious Talk Radio is available Monday through Friday on select radio stations across the country. To tune in, turn the dial to:

KKNW, 1150 AM
in Seattle, 4-5 pm (PST)

WPLM, 1390 AM
in Plymouth, MA, and Cape Cod,
12-1 pm (EST)

WBNW, 1120 AM

so strongly about supporting organizations like Life Extension. We feel we need to align ourselves with like-minded holistic groups to really create a movement.”

In the future, the partners hope to expand Conscious Talk Radio across the country and eventually around the world, steadily adding new stations. They hope to syndicate other programs and eventually offer 24 hours of “conscious talk” radio. They are also working to expand their reach beyond the airwaves.

“We’re working on setting up a nonprofit foundation as another vehicle to provide health-support services,” Barbero says. “We want to have a center where people can get treatment, attend lectures and conferences, and learn. That’s a dream we’ve all had.”

in Boston, 12-1 pm (EST)

The program can also be heard streaming live on the Internet by visiting:

www.conscioustalk.net

(4-5 pm PST)

www.moneymattersradio.net

(12-1 pm EST)

To learn more about the founders of Conscious Talk, visit their website www.conscioustalk.net). For more information on this syndicated program, call 1-508-541-0144.

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