

Second Life Bikes is Her Second Act

Segment	Who	Copy
Intro	Kerri Martin	<p>I love bikes, I love that coming in here every day is something, whether it's a new... I should say a used bike, a different bike that comes in, a different kid, a different person with another story, so I would say it's never boring, it's never the same thing. I love wearing two different hats sometimes because sometimes I have to think of things in business senses.</p> <p>But then I also have to put on my social service, hat and have some compassion.</p>
		INTRO MUSIC
Podcast Overview	Andy Levine	<p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major career changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. The stories are in their own words and the words of friends and family that helped them find a new path.</p> <p>I'm your host Andy Levine. Every two weeks we bring you a new, second act story.</p> <p>Today's episode focuses on Kerri Martin. Kerri is a Jersey Girl who grew up in Freehold, New Jersey – actually went to the same high school as Bruce Springsteen.</p> <p>Kerri had a comfortable life working in information technology in lower Manhattan. But on September 11, 2001 she was riding her bike to work along the West Side Highway. she watched the two planes crash into the World Trade Center. And she knew it was time to do something else.</p> <p>Today she runs a non-profit in Asbury Park called Second Life Bikes.</p>
		BKE SHOP BACKGROUND NOISE

Today's Episode	Andy	<p>Second Life Bikes is in based in Asbury Park, New Jersey in a former appliance store. It's actually just a short walk from my house.</p> <p>It's a bike repair shop so if you have a flat tire or need new brake pads, they'll fix the problem. But it's also a community bike shop. So if you want to borrow their tools and fix the problem yourself, that's fine too.</p> <p>What they are best known for is their "earn a bike" program. Area teenagers work at Second Life Bikes learning how to repair bikes. And after they put in 15 hours of time, they earn a bike of their own, which they restore using the skills they've learned.</p> <p>She started Second Life Bikes in 2009. But her story, and a life-long love affair with bikes starts in New York City after graduating from the College of New Jersey.</p>
Working in New York City	Kerri	<p>I interviewed a couple places and ended up at Commerce Bank, so a German investment bank, not really because I had any finance degree but they did like to hire just young grads who were kind of worldly.</p> <p>And I ended up then in their IT Department...</p>
	Andy	<p>She wasn't in love with the job or the work. But she was just out of school and enjoying life in New York City.</p>
	Kerri	<p>Thought I would be there for maybe like a year, accumulate some money, go somewhere else. But I think what I got used to was not necessarily I loved the job, but it was a very nice company to work for. So working for European company, you have eight weeks' vacation and people leave at 5:30. So what I got used to was just the nice New York City lifestyle.</p>
	Andy	<p>A year turned into five years. But then on September 11th, 2001, Kerri was riding her bike to work at the bank which was just west of the World Trade Center.</p>
When September 11 th Hit	Kerri	<p>September 11, I was on my bike. I was on my bike heading down the West Side Highway and I stopped on the pier which is kind of...there's lots of piers, but a pier that is literally probably over Canal Street. And I stopped on the bench and just sat there for a bit because I was a little bit early, and saw the first plane come and...</p> <p>Andy: So you were biking there and stops just because...</p> <p>Stopped just because it was 8:40. I was a little early, just figured out I'd stop and just sit there for a bit. And the first plane went into...and it's literally not believing your eyes...</p>

	Andy	After September 11 th , she worked remotely for the bank for a couple of months. But she never did go back to their offices in Lower Manhattan.
	Kerri	I had known for years that I didn't really belong doing what I was doing, but it's also sometimes hard to leave when you're just getting a paycheck and you're not sure.
	Andy	While she wasn't passionate about working at the bank, she was passionate about bikes. She caught the cycling bug on a term abroad in Germany.
	Kerri	One of the first things I did was buy a bike when I got there and rode it like every single day around Frankfurt. So it's definitely where the addiction started.
	Andy	While she was living in New York and working at Commerce Bank, she met Karen Overton who ran an organization called Recycle-a-Bicycle.
Working at "Recycle-a-Bicycle"	Kerri	So Karen Overton had started that organization and she had something called "Ladies Night" every Tuesday night. It was just like an open workshop for women to kind of come and get their hands dirty and learn, and volunteer at the same time, so I went to that faithfully. I loved it.
	Andy	After she quit working at Commerce Bank she traveled around the country for six months trying to figure out what to do next. When she finally came back to New York City, she had her answer...
	Kerri	Came back here, went to a Christmas party in New York City and met Karen Overton who was the Executive Director of Recycle-A-Bicycle who I already knew from ladies' night. And I just asked her if there was any possibility of me working for Recycle- A-Bicycle, and she said, "Sure." So I started working for them within the next couple months.
	Andy	So Kerri was now working fulltime as a bike mechanic. And loving every minute of it.
Back to New Jersey	Kerri	That's when I moved to Brooklyn, worked for their shop in the East Village, and I absolutely loved it. I worked seven days a week and was really...like lived and breathed Recycle-A-Bicycle. I love, love my job but I was getting a little weary of New York City. So that's when I felt that...I was being drawn back to Monmouth County and coming to visit my parents in Freehold. Knowing what was happening kind of in Red Bank in Asbury, reading the triCityNews here, seeing like, oh, there is life outside of New York.

	Andy	So she moved back to the Jersey Shore and worked in a bunch of different bike shops. But things changed when she met Father Bill Kenny at Holy Spirit Church in Asbury Park.
The Bike Church	Kerri	I had Mondays off from work and I had just found a garage space at Holy Spirit Church that Father Bill said they didn't use, and I could use it if I wanted to. So I cleared it all out and gathered some bikes and tools, and it didn't necessarily have a plan of what this was gonna be, but, you know, literally invited some neighborhood girls over one Monday to teach them how to fix bikes. From that day, you know, it turned into a youth program every Monday.
	Andy	Kerri ran what became known as "The Bike Church" for five years in her spare time. But in 2009, she quit her job as a bike mechanic and decided to start Second Life Bikes. I asked her to share the organization's mission.
Overview of Second Life Bikes	Kerri	I always describe it as a youth earn-a-bike program and community bike shop. So the earn-a-bike aspect is that teenagers can come here and work hours to earn a bike for themselves or they could earn bike parts or they can get community service hours. So that idea...we don't aspire that they all grow up to become bike mechanics, but that we're giving them some sort of like mechanical skills and some sort of life skills. Just showing up at a place at 3 o'clock and signing a time card, and learning how to shake hands and look people in the eye. They come for the bicycle but we hope they're also learning other things along the way too.
	Andy	Steven is a high school freshman who was repairing a girls bicycle when I stopped by on a Saturday morning.
	Steven	It's fun to be here. I mean if you don't have anything else to do, why not do volunteer here. You know, it helps other people. You help yourself eventually. You get a free bike and learn how to build it. You know how to fix it. You get your skills.
	Andy	Roger Boyce is the Director of the Business Development Center in Asbury Park. His job is to help create jobs in the city. He first met Kerri at a festival where Kerri was running a bike valet to raise money for what would become Second Life Bikes.

<p>A Word About Kerri</p>	<p>Roger Boyce</p>	<p>She has a certain aura of kindness about her which is kind of amazing when you think about it. Maybe it's because she's so authentic and has a real desire to help others. That's what I think, but she's truly committed to the work that she does. I think that comes out of her true desire to help others, and she's done an amazing job of it.</p>
	<p>Andy</p>	<p>Roger worked with Kerri to help Second Life Bikes find a permanent space.</p>
	<p>Roger</p>	<p>She was sort of running what I call a Migrant Bike shop. She was going from one location to the other in Asbury, keeping the things going, but she had no permanent home. And she needed a permanent place because if she had no home, this whole stuff would just end.</p> <p>So I began to think about how can I find her a permanent home? And I looked at other places in Asbury, and then it became obvious. The place that she currently was in is perfect.</p> <p>So what happened was I went with her to meet the landlord. And it became very obvious that he really admired the work that she was doing. And, really, he was quite, you know, fond of Kerri and her work. And I explained to him, "We wanted to buy the building. Would you work with us?" And he said, "Yeah, I will."</p>
	<p>Andy</p>	<p>It took a number of years. But with a sympathetic landlord, a successful crowd-funding campaign and a partner non-profit that will share space in the facility, Second Life Bikes was finally able to purchase its' building. It was a huge step for Kerri and Second Life Bikes.</p> <p>And that has allowed Kerri to move on to a new challenge. Last year she gave birth to a beautiful girl named Nelly.</p>

A New Challenge	Kerri	Nelly is now growing up in the bike shop and she spends a lot of time... so that is beautiful too. In the summer I joke that I would say to someone oh you need your flat fixed, I'll fix your flats if you play peek-a-boo with Nellie and I look over, and people would be like peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo.
	Andy	For the final word, we're going to go back to Roger Boyce who has worked with dozens of social entrepreneurs like Kerri. I asked him about the success factors for start-ups like Second Like Bikes.
Advice on Second Acts	Roger	<p>I call it the "burn your ship strategy." So, you know the metaphor? So, it's basically you're an invading army, and you're invading, and you burn your ships. So you have two options, die or succeed or die and conquer. So I think you have to have some of that kind of mental attitude.</p> <p>You also gotta be a little bit naive because if you know how difficult it's gonna be, you're not gonna do it.</p> <p>So the combination of the burn your ship strategy and being a little naive is helpful. I'm not saying be stupid or foolish, but as close to that line as you can get without going over is kinda the way you have to do it. Because you gotta figure out hard problems. And you gotta stick to it when you think it doesn't seem possible, but you just keep on swinging.</p>
	Andy	We're so glad that Kerri Martin kept on swinging. If you're ever in Asbury Park, please stop by Second Life Bikes on Main Street and say hello to Kerri and her amazing team.

		OUTGOING MUSIC
Thank-You and Show Credits	Andy	<p>So that is a wrap on Episode 2 of "Second Act Stories."</p> <p>Of course, we want to thank Kerri Martin and her "aura of kindness." And we also want to thank Roger Boyce and the volunteers at Second Life Bikes for taking the time to speak with us.</p> <p>If you know of a "Second Act Story" that we should profile, please contact me, that's Andy Levine, at SecondActStories@gmail.com. I'd love to hear from you.</p> <p>And if you're considering your own second act and you're ready to "burn your ships" – we hope Second Life Bikes might provide some inspiration for your project.</p> <p>We hope you'll keep listening. We plan to bring you a new Second Act Story" every two weeks. So there's a lot more ahead.</p>