

# Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Jen Weidner, Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer

**Jen Weidner 00:04** Today is February 3, 2023 I'm Jen Weidner with the Jeffersonville Township Public Library conducting interviews for Pandemic Perspectives Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. This project was made possible with a grant from the Indiana Genealogical Society. I'm here today with Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer 00:29** Yes, ma'am, you got it right.

**Jen Weidner 00:32** So what is it that you do for a living?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer 00:36** So it's pretty unique or I think it's pretty unique. I own a horse farm. And we have two different programs that we run at the farm. We have our regular farm program is horse boarding, horseback riding lessons and summer camps for kids. And then we also have a nonprofit Equine Assisted counseling and learning program at the farm. That's through Opening Gates, and that's where we use horses in counseling sessions. So I'm a licensed mental health counselor, and I am the counselor here for that program.

**Jen Weidner 01:10** That is so unique.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer 01:12** Yeah!

**Jen Weidner 01:13** That is so cool. We know animals are very healing so

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer 01:17** They absolutely are.

**Jen Weidner 01:19** Do you remember when you, well what your first reaction was to hearing about the COVID-19 Coronavirus?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenauer 01:26** Um, I actually do remember because my first thought was, what are we going to have to do to change here in order to continue to provide services and there was just so many unknowns initially about COVID. You know, there were so many possibilities or get guesstimates for lack of a better word of how we needed to address it, how we needed to stay safe, what we needed to do on our end as a business. And so I think the majority of everyone was just kind of going through the motions and hoping for the best initially, and we shut down the first two months about I think it was that first March and April we shut

down because we just didn't know enough about it to see what we needed to do in order to try to keep everyone safe. And in the back of my mind, we had all of these animals to take care of as well. So if we got COVID or our staff got COVID how in the world would we be able to take care of not only our animals, but the animals that our borders placed in our care and trusted us to take care of. So we shut down those first two months to just try to see, educate ourselves a little better, and give it time for the you know professionals to let us know what we needed to do in order to stay safe, move forward.

**Jen Weidner 02:48** So my next question was going to be, did you believe it would come to the United States, Indiana so sounds like you knew that it was going to get here.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaer 02:56** Yeah, we pretty much had a good idea that it was going to get here because you know everything you heard leading up to it was there really no borders and no boundaries with it. Everyone was susceptible and it knew no limits. So we figured it definitely was gonna it was gonna come knocking on our door.

**Jen Weidner 03:14** Absolutely. So how did your business change? Once you were able to reopen after those first two months?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaer 03:22** So for our boarding and our horseback riding our summer camp program we actually didn't do that the first year. We just felt that we couldn't keep all the kiddos safe. Especially our little ones there was no way we're gonna get them to keep their masks on while they were outside in the hot sun right in the dirty barn. That we did not provide camps that first year. Boarding pretty much went back to normal. We just ask everyone to please be responsible and respectful and keep their space even though we were outdoors. Because at that time, we still didn't know how different it would be from outdoor versus indoor. And then our riding lesson program the parents were phenomenal. All of the kids were fantastic. They did wear their masks throughout the entirety of their lessons. We had everyone sanitize their hands before they ever came in to start working with the horses. And there wasn't one complaint from that at all. So that's how we changed in that manner. That therapy program, I realized in those two months that we shut down, that was probably the worst thing we could have done. Because those kids that we were seeing in therapy that's when they really needed the therapy, their anxiety was increasing, the stress was increasing. And the same thing for the parents. So looking back, I know we did it for the right reasons, but it wasn't good timing to do that. So we opened back up and we held every single one of our sessions and services outside. And I said to the parents, you know in the summertime when it gets scorching hot we would move indoors where the air conditioner was and I said we're not going to be able to do that.

**Jen Weidner 04:58** Right

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaer 05:00** Kiddos still had to wear their masks even though we were sweating underneath them. We still had them sanitize their hands before and after. And when we moved into that first winter, we still kept everything completely outdoors. And that has completely changed the way that I do therapy now. We've not moved back indoors. And not done in the cold, cold winter. I just use that as one of those obstacles that we need to learn to work with and figure out how to overcome and come out stronger on the other side.

**Jen Weidner 05:33** Absolutely! That's a great way to think about it instead of taking it being like oh, this is horrible. It's like it's a lesson, it's a great teaching tool.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 05:41 Absolutely! We can't always control things and the weather is one of those things. So we've got to figure out how we can live and work alongside it.

**Jen Weidner** 05:49 Yeah, speaking of weather, we're doing this interview via Zoom because it's like 20 something today, and she couldn't be away from the farm because needed to keep the water flowing for the animals. So we just say well, let's do zoom.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 06:06 And for the record the ice this morning was over an inch thick in the tanks. Oh my gosh. Yes, the thickness has been in quite a while

**Jen Weidner** 06:14 And that's just from overnight right?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 06:16 Overnight, Yes, just so we got all the ice broken. Thank goodness the sun did come out so that should keep it fairly thin for us this evening. The wind chill is pretty cold right now but that sun will help offset that. But on these cold,cold days we don't go far from the farm because we have to make sure everyone stays hydrated. You know that they can actually get to the water because of the frozen ground. We had to carry buckets to a couple of the horses this morning because if you recall yesterday was not below freezing so it started thawing and it was super muddy. Well, all of that rough ground froze overnight

**Jen Weidner** 06:58 Of course.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 07:00 Oh the horse that they're walking on very rough, uneven ground this morning. That's rock hard. For some of our older horses. We had to carry buckets of water to, to make sure that they stay hydrated.

**Jen Weidner** 07:12 So your husband is a Jeffersonville firefighter. How did things change for you all with his job being pretty hands on and unpredictable?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 07:23 It was pretty scary initially. He is amazing and I have some health issues that puts me at higher risk than the majority of the population. So we talked about that quite significantly and he is amazing. He has worn his mask and he continues to wear his mask indoors. But when it first started, you know he couldn't shut down so he still had to go to work. During the first few months that we were shut down trying to figure out how to make everything work here. And he like you said is very hands on and up close and personal space in some situations when they get calls, you know, to help the community and so he just stayed mask up he made sure that he sanitized his hands every chance he could. He makes sure that he was fully vaccinated. And when he was able to get the vaccinations, he got them and he just tried to be as responsible as he could be and you know, you can do everything right and something still happened and we'll leave that in the back of our mind. But that's his job.

**Jen Weidner** 08:23 Right?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 08:23 He's helping the community and to do his job and, and that's what he did and, and he did an amazing job of balancing those two things: home life and his work life

**Jen Weidner** 08:35 That's what I've heard from other firefighters that I've talked to that you just had to do your best and keep trying to keep everybody safe.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 08:42 Right? And that's you know, at the end of the day, you just have to know that you did the best you can do and hope that it worked out.

**Jen Weidner** 08:48 Yeah, cuz the pandemic didn't discriminate. It didn't care who you were. Nothing

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 08:55 Not at all. It had blinders on when it came to that for sure.

**Jen Weidner** 09:00 What are some things you've learned from the pandemic?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 09:04 You know, one of the things that I work with the kiddos in the counseling session is try to try to focus on those things that you can control and those things that you can't control learn how to work alongside. And I think that's probably one of the biggest, not things that I've learned but one of the biggest takeaways from the pandemic. This pandemic was huge. You know, it's one of the biggest stressors that I think probably any of us have gone through in a long time as a whole. You know that, that everyone was going through at the same time. And there was so much of that, that we couldn't control. You know, we couldn't control COVID itself, but we also couldn't control the person standing next to us. You know, we couldn't control the way people decided to run their business. We couldn't control the way families decided to hold their gatherings. So that was something that I used to really work with the clients and myself on those things. You have to let go. What you can control is choosing whether you go into those and but what you can control is choosing whether you do wear that mask or whether you do get vaccinated, those are things you can control. There's so many other things that we can't, and we can't focus on those things because our anxiety and stress is just going to go out of the roof. And that's not healthy and if, if we're not healthy, then we're more susceptible to everything across the board, not just COVID but so many other things across the board that's going to affect our once healthy relationships that are now possibly going to start stressing and struggling as well. So I think that's probably my biggest takeaway is just that reminder that you really do need to focus on what you can control and try your best to let go of those things that you can't control and figure out how to work and live a seven.

**Jen Weidner** 10:58 And that's sage advice for any situation, not just a pandemic. But just being human.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 11:04 Absolutely, absolutely.

**Jen Weidner** 11:08 What would you like people in the future to remember about the pandemic? Let's say somebody comes in 20-30 years from now and is reading these transcripts or was listening to this interview? What do you want people to remember?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaue** 11:23 I would love for people to try to remember the positives of the pandemic. And I'm sure that probably sounds crazy because there's so much negative associated with a pandemic, but there was so much positive that came about it as well. You know, when the community came together, and we make choices based on the whole instead of the individual, you know, remember those types of things that the businesses that did stay open, that had restrictions in place and those individuals that supported that, you know, not the ones that complain to them, but seeing how, how resilient we were, I think as a as a population, we were pretty resilient. Because we did make it through as a whole. We did make it through it. Of course there's been tragedy. Unfortunately, that's in every situation. But I think that focusing on the fact that and not just us in this community but in the whole United States. How we were able to overcome. Things changed as a result of it, but we are still plugging away. You know, we

made and we figured out probably for some situations like in my case, better ways to deal with things and better ways to run things. You know, change. Change isn't always a bad thing. This was a terrible thing to have to go through, but good things did come up.

**Jen Weidner** 12:44 Well, we learned to adapt. We learned to use Zoom to do everything.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 12:49 Absolutely. And who would have thought that we would have done that prior to there was no reason two prior

**Jen Weidner** 12:54 Oh, I never would have I would have thought it was ridiculous.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 12:59 It kind of forced us to have to do that. And realize that you know what? It's really not so bad.

**Jen Weidner** 13:06 I think it brought a lot of families closer together that wouldn't talk on the phone, but you could zoom and see each other. I mean, that's what happened in my family for holidays. We would just have family out of town, we would just Zoom

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 13:20 Right and that's one of the positive things that came from it. I think it's much easier now you know when you live far if you have family that live far from you. They can hop on Zoom now and see each other. Whereas before it would have had to be a phone call. If that because it's so much more personable being able to actually see the person

**Jen Weidner** 13:40 Absolutely.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 13:41 In front of you. Grandparents are able to stay in touch with their grandkids a lot more now. That live further from them because they can just hop on Zoom and see them whereas before they would have to actually travel to go see them.

**Jen Weidner** 13:57 So is there anything else you'd like us to know about the pandemic or your experiences?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 14:03 I can't think of anything else.

**Jen Weidner** 14:05 So were you and your husband COVID free? Did you all stay safe?

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 14:11 I feel like I'm gonna jinx myself by saying this that we did stay COVID free.

**Jen Weidner** 14:17 Good.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 14:18 We were very, very fortunate.

**Jen Weidner** 14:21 Yeah, I feel like I'm one of the few in my library that has never had it.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 14:27 Yes, I know and again I feel like I'm gonna jinx myself by saying that.

**Jen Weidner** 14:32 I hope you don't!

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenausauer** 14:34 So far we have been COVID free

**Jen Weidner** 14:37 Good, good! Well, thank you for your time today and I'm glad you were able to hop on Zoom for this so we didn't have to put it off any longer.

**Shara Wilson-Wiesenaer** 14:45 Thank you!