

# Nicole Lenfert Sharp

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pandemic, client, hairdressers, mask, protocols, home, salon, wears, firefighter, affect, emergency fund, sanitizing, work, coming, people, grant, geological society, products, ingredients, dirty clothes

## SPEAKERS

Jen Weidner, Nicole Lenfert Sharp

**Jen Weidner 00:01** Today is February 21, 2023. I'm Jen Weidner with the Jeffersonville Township Public Library, conducting interviews for Pandemic Perspectives Jeffersonville Residents Recount Their Lives During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. This project was made possible with a grant from the Indiana Geological Society. I'm here today with Nicole Lenfert Sharp. Thank you for being here today.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 00:26** Thanks for having me.

**Jen Weidner 00:27** What is it that you do for a living?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 00:29** I'm a hairdresser, I own Balance Holistic Salon and Spa and I've ,I've come down to just me in a suite now.

**Jen Weidner 00:39** Do you remember when you first heard about COVID?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 00:42** Yes. I was in the salon, very naive to it. And I had a client kind of warned me that it's coming. And so yeah, it made me go home and rethink it.

**Jen Weidner 01:00** So I guess as a hitter if you do get kind of like inside, insider track on things, because people tell you stuff.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 01:06** She's a nurse practitioner and just kind of gave me her thoughts. on it and we had just moved into the new space and expanded. So that was really scary. How's this gonna affect us, just spent a lot of money on construction. I have four or five girls at the time working under me depending on you know, a space and I know if we close down, I'd still have to pay rent and all these things. So I got nervous pretty quickly after talking to her.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 01:38 I mean why would it not.

**Jen Weidner** 01:38 So I mean, you knew it was coming to Southern Indiana. You knew it was going to be here. Right? Oh my so many times. We heard that. Oh, it's on the West Coast. And yeah, why would it not get here.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 01:50 That would be naive, but we opened up and six weeks later was when the shutdown was.

**Jen Weidner** 01:57 That was my next question. How did your job change during the pandemic you guys immediately closed for six weeks?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 02:05 Well, the two weeks which at first was great, I could use two weeks off. And why we even thought well after the two weeks

**Jen Weidner** 02:13 It'll be gone.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 02:14 Yeah, So looking back and it's so silly sometimes, but I mean, I couldn't work from home, I couldn't do a haircut over zoom. So it changed a lot and then if my hairdressers couldn't come in and it affected all of us. So when we came back we have protocols like anybody else. And we had sanitation lined up because I mean that one on one everything has to be perfect..

**Jen Weidner** 02:49 So you guys couldn't keep six feet between you and your client you're doing hair here.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 02:53 Exactly. So we both have our masks on you had to sanitize before walking into the salon altogether. Anyways, I had baggies for each client that had a comb clips, towel and a cape and each one that came in with I'd open it, use that for the client and then it all gets thrown in a wash. So that was something we could do or we did. And I sent out all of the protocols to all the clients so that they would get it ahead of time. So I think they were very impressed with how we did things. And actually got two hairdressers from other salons who were not as strict on the protocol. So

**Jen Weidner** 03:41 So these protocols come down from like the Indiana State Board of Hairdressers?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 03:48 Yes, I follow that. And then I followed common sense you know, when I decided some on my own that seemed to work out pretty well. So yeah, but there's a bunch of different sides and different ideas and just kind of came up with what I thought you know, worked best and we didn't really good. We never had an outbreak with the other hairdressers.

**Jen Weidner** 03:57 Yeah Oh good. Very good.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 04:10 Yes. So yeah, that, that worked out.

**Jen Weidner** 04:14 So how long did you keep all those protocols in place?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 04:22 Like the last few years was just a blur.

**Jen Weidner** 04:24 I know when I first started coming to you, we were still sanitizing our hands and wearing masks. And that was in 2021 like Yeah, yeah, like fall 21

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 04:38 So it seemed like it gradually as we became more educated on the virus, we still did new capes with every client but I didn't seal them up and you know, do that. Yeah, the hand sanitizing pretty much everything stayed the same even longer than other places started opening things up. So we did that quite a bit and then you know, at some point the masks were listed, but even now, I mean, if you had the sniffles, go ahead, but a mask on

**Jen Weidner** 05:10 Absolutely

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 05:12 Right! And I do the same even if my asthma was bad, it was causing me to cough. I'll still put one on. So there's no question and just peace of mind. I think it's respectful. So I didn't have a lot of negative feelings towards that. I just want to respect my clients.

**Jen Weidner** 05:33 So I know I had heard from other people in your same business that products were hard to come by or the prices went sky high.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 05:41 That's still a problem. Yeah. Yes, I mean, everything's so expensive now. But I think it was the individual ingredients like tea tree you couldn't come by some of the ingredients to make the product so that's where some of that now it's probably some shifting and things as well but yes, at the time and there's a certain ingredients and certain things we just couldn't get. So we had other options. You know, try to be comparable with that and we, we shipped products to clients that we couldn't see so shampoos and things. Some people buy gift certificates. That was helpful.

**Jen Weidner** 06:3 Oh, absolutely, yeah.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 06:34 I definitely feel like we were the forgotten field, you know, by the government and we weren't given any kinds of loans or grants, eventually they got better. But being self employed and having booth renters because they weren't considered employees. I didn't make the cut.

**Jen Weidner** 06:56 You couldn't apply for any of that. Yeah.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 06:58** Yeah so having the construction loan and the emergency fund that I had for that and some other things in place, by the time COVID you know, 2020 was done emergency funds were done. And so when other things started going wrong, our air conditioner going out. I had no emergency funds, because nothing was ever given to me. I do use my own money. And that's when I closed my big salon and just downsized to just me in a suite because I couldn't afford it.

**Jen Weidner 07:34** Yeah, I think people didn't realize that there were a lot of people who own their own business that didn't get any loans because of things like you said it just by the time it got to you there wasn't any left

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 07:44** Right, right.

**Jen Weidner 07:46** So were you able to the people that rented from you were they able to move on to other salons or

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 07:57** no, because there we were all under the same protocol and the same issues and we can get unemployment. Why when everyone else got it? And I'm very fortunate that my husband is a firefighter and he can, you know, take care of us but single mothers and you know, are just one income and all of a sudden your income is taken away. What are you going to do, you have to pay for rent, and there's just some really hard times.

**Jen Weidner 08:34** So as you said, your husband is a firefighter. Did his job affect the way you all did things at home or was he offline by then? I don't know when he became the deputy chief.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 08:43** He moved into another administrative position before that. And so he was home he come home and take all his clothes he wore to work and put in the dirty clothes, straight to the shower. Before any of us even saw him, left the shoes outside. That sort of thing. It did affect because he's exposed to a lot more. So he had to be real diligent on that and not bringing things home and he still goes to work every day.

**Jen Weidner 09:19** Mean, even if he wasn't he was in an admin role so he still was around firefighters and other first responders who've been out working interacting with people that we didn't know at the time had COVID.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 09:33** And trying to come up with the protocols for the department and you know, during those things, so he was definitely busy. You know, I think there was probably a lot more calls a lot more runs than so

**Jen Weidner 09:50** What have you learned from the pandemic? Good, bad.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 09:59** Well, a lot of people did come out and support hairdressers, not necessarily the government but you know, other people in the society as a whole I certainly have more respect for that. Because then when you couldn't get your hair cut or hair done, oh, this person is actually really important! Yes ! Oh, no, I mean, my clients have always loved and respected me. I never had to feel that way with my people, but I'm just saying

**Jen Weidner 10:18** Yeah, if you color your hair every four to six weeks, and then you couldn't cut their hair every four to six weeks. As a whole Yeah.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 10:34** Yeah. And you know, and I've always believed in having an emergency fund. I didn't know had any idea would be for a pandemic,

**Jen Weidner 10:47** Right!

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 10:48** But still to have one. Especially if what you do isn't necessarily supported. You know, take care of yourself. Take care of yourself. To think for yourself as much as everything changes all the time. Some of it was just silly. And just to protect yourself, no one else is gonna do it type thing. And self employment is hard. Having your own business is hard.

**Jen Weidner 11:23** Anytime but it's during a pandemic.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 11:26** Even if it's not, it's hard. It's hard.

**Jen Weidner 11:28** Right? Right.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 11:29** If you get sick! Yeah, this, this was big time and it affected me because I had no funds and I had to close. So all those people had to move and go to new places. Yeah. Lost a lot of money.

**Jen Weidner 11:47** What do you hope people will continue to do now that we're pretty much out of the pandemic? What do you hope that people will keep doing?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 11:55** Washing their hands?

**Jen Weidner 11:56** Yes, that's what everybody says. Just wash your hands

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp 12:00** Right? I think just being more empathetic, especially to people who have the immune compromise. My mother still wears her mask, and she gets made fun of in public. She'll get mocked, you know, and they're almost 70 year old woman with immune compromise issues here. I don't know why anyone would make fun of her.

**Jen Weidner 12:28** As you saw when you came in, I had a mask and my boss had on a mask. She has cancer. So we, I try and just keep her safe. Not everybody wears a mask around here. That's their choice. I don't want to risk getting her sick.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 12:40 Yeah

**Jen Weidner** 12:40 I don't want to get sick with anything. I have to go home to mom, my almost 80 year old mom who has health issues.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 12:46 This is not a political thing. This is nothing more than staying healthy. And being your own advocate.

**Jen Weidner** 12:55 Yeah, I still always have a mask in my bag. Yeah, just I just gauge like is there a lot of people here. Do you know, do I feel safe? Like mock me, I don't care.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 13:07 The client has a mask. I'll always ask

**Jen Weidner** 13:09 Absolutely

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 13:10 Wear a mask as well. Or I'll just do it. But yeah, just again, just being kinder more.

**Jen Weidner** 13:19 Yeah, because we don't know what people are going through. I mean, maybe somebody has anxiety if the mask makes them feel better. Maybe they're sick. Maybe they're having sick relatives, whatever like doesn't hurt anybody else if somebody's wearing a mask.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 13:32 Right.

**Jen Weidner** 13:35 In the future, let's say 50-100 years from now somebody's listening to this reading the transcripts. What would you like them to know about the pandemic, from your perspective?

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 13:52 Think we had an opportunity as a country to come together and we didn't and it made things even worse. And just looking back in history and you see, you know, times during the war or you know, with the greatest generation, they had to be and everyone came together and I think it's a shame that that didn't work for us, you know, or even 9/11 if you want to come to something closer to you know, current. To see the country come together and then the pandemic. I just wasn't and I hope that we can all be kind again to one another.

**Jen Weidner** 14:37 Thank you so much for coming down here today.

**Nicole Lenfert Sharp** 14:39 You're welcome.