



Carrie Wilson success story, Carrie Wilson Makeup – August 2023

By Lorrie DeFrank

By the time Carrie Wilson graduated from high school, she was an accomplished classical pianist with musical expectations. But it turned out to be a different type of artistry that made her a successful entrepreneur. Owner of Carrie Wilson Makeup for a decade, she spent much of the last 25 years training and traveling the U.S. to do makeup for politicians, athletes and others for TV productions; brides and their wedding parties; and for other special occasions.

Last February, she moved her cosmetics business into a 104-year-old building in Jacksonville’s trendy Brooklyn neighborhood near downtown. She shares the space with Julie Ryan Photography, and both businesses often collaborate with clients and services.

Wilson, who lived in the Jacksonville area since she was 8, quit college after two semesters as a music major in search of her passion. She found it at a Clinique counter of Dillard’s at a local mall. “In the mid-1990s, it was hard to get a job in cosmetics,” she said. “That was a pretty prestigious job and they didn’t hire 19-year-olds. I begged for a job and they hired me to work for Clinique in two different stores.”

That persistence propelled her throughout her career.

When the acclaimed Bobbi Brown Cosmetics came to Jacksonville in 2000, Wilson started to do freelance and counter work for them, quickly advancing to a regional artist and becoming a member of their A Team where she traveled and trained for 15 years, eventually becoming a professional in her own right. “They allowed me to build my career while I worked for them. That doesn’t happen often in our world,” she said.

Ten years ago, Wilson went completely on her own and about two years later she started her own brand of cosmetics, also called Carrie Wilson Makeup. “All of my products are made in Canada or Germany, and my brushes are made in the United States,” she said. “I build palettes and collections based on what I think women need and want. I want makeup to be easy for women.”

Wilson’s business enjoyed a further boost two years ago when she connected with the Jacksonville Women’s Business Center.

“A friend who is heavily involved with JAX Chamber told me about the JWBC Success Circle, a mastermind group of female entrepreneurs that meets once a month in Ponte Vedra,” she said. “What a supportive group of women!”

Wilson credits Joan Bonnette, who facilitates the St. Johns County Success Circle, and the structure of the give-and-take program for helping her grow her business.

Through that, she learned about JAX Bridges, an entrepreneurial growth program of JAX Chamber, and was accepted into Cohort 15 of the fall 2021 session.

“I found that to be incredibly helpful,” Wilson said. “I learned more big picture type of things and it was nice to be surrounded by people who are doing what you are doing or are trying to do bigger things than you are doing. They are really smart people to run things by.”

She appreciated learning how to create a business model and write a capability statement, which she said was significant. “When I was looking for commercial property, I was able to talk about it more easily,” she said. “I learned how to pitch my business well, hitting on certain important points, and how to make measurable goals and revisit them constantly.”

Wilson praised JWBC and JAX Chamber for what they offer Northeast Florida and said she would like to get involved in more of their programs. “I don’t think people realize how much help is out there for entrepreneurs, especially women. The cost is really low and their reach is really wide,” she said. “I feel like I’m on the tip of the iceberg; there is so much more I want to do with them.”

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