

*SHE SAID / SHE SAID PODCAST WITH LAURA COX KAPLAN*

*Episode 285: Building a community that connects, collaborates, and creates magic together!*

*Guests: The Southern C founders Whitney Long and Cheri Leavy*

Laura Cox Kaplan ([00:06](#)):

Hi, I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. Welcome to She Said, she Said Podcast. Here on this podcast, we talk about the building blocks and the micro habits that help us create real and lasting influence. What do I mean by that? Well, we're talking about the kind of influence that helps you achieve your goals and whatever it is in life that you want to accomplish, but perhaps most importantly, it's the type of influence that helps you create real impact, and that enables you to truly thrive.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([00:45](#)):

Welcome to episode 285. I don't know about you, but I often find that when someone in my network suggests an opportunity or maybe an idea to me or says, gosh, you'd be really good at that, that can go a long way toward boosting my confidence about taking a risk or doing something that is scary, or maybe seeing an opportunity that was actually right in front of me, but that I had missed. I have benefited from that type of encouragement over and over and over again, and I am truly grateful for it. You know, it can be a really powerful gift to receive that kind of encouragement and support, but also to give it to someone else. And to me, it really goes to one of the most important reasons why it's important to both thoughtfully and intentionally build and maintain a strong community for yourself.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([01:48](#)):

Now, community is a term that I think we toss around pretty loosely, but it is incredibly, incredibly important. And in this week's conversation, we're gonna break down part of why it is so important. Now, beyond what I just said, there are some other really important and powerful reasons for creating community and the value that it can provide to you. Things like knowledge sharing and opportunities to collaborate, and opportunities to create maybe more innovative solutions because the problems that you're working on will have been subjected to more input and maybe more rigor around them. Now, all of that said, it can be difficult to get all that you need both personally and professionally from a single group. And instead, it can be helpful to think broadly about how to build your network and really the different and specific needs and challenges that you're facing. But sometimes you actually do find so much of what you need in a single group, and that is why I am especially thrilled to talk to the founders of our collaboration partner, the Southern C, about how they built this very special community of theirs and what it has meant to them.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([03:11](#)):

Over the past 11 years, Cherie Levy and Whitney Long saw a need, and they did not miss a beat before pulling together the most thoughtful women in their existing network to create something that has given so much lifeblood to so many creative entrepreneurs over the past decade plus present company included. I have learned so much from this group, and I have loved collaborating with them to create content for you here at She Said, she Said Podcast, but

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it's content that supports both of our brands. I think that the content we create together beautifully illustrates the power of community and really the value that it can provide. Now, if you have been following along here at She Said, she Said Podcast for a while, you have likely heard conversations from this year's The Southern C, she said, she said Podcast collaboration series. Now, this is the third such series that we've done, and if you've been joining me each week, you've heard from some of the amazing women who are part of the Southern C Network and who have joined me here to share what they've learned in order to support you in your journey.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([04:27](#)):

It's a really beautiful thing. Today's conversation is no exception, but it is a very special one to me because it is with Cherie and Whitney, who, as I said, are the co-founders of the Southern C, but they have also become my friends in this conversation. I talk to Cherie and Whitney about the importance of community. We talk about why they built this network and what really makes it unique. And in particular, you will quickly discover that a big part of what differentiates this group is its co-founders and the culture that these two women inspire through their own personal actions. We also talk about how they built a business together and a business that is focused not only around community, but also around membership, and what ultimately keeps that business going. Now, friend, whether the Southern C is new to you, or if you have been part of this community for the past few years, I think that you will find this conversation today with Cherie and Whitney.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([05:34](#)):

Very inspiring. I can't begin to overstate how powerful this network has been to me personally in providing not only support that I knew I needed, but also support that I hadn't even considered and yet received it. Anyway, it has been such a beneficial part of my life, and I find that the value just keeps coming. Okay, friend. Enough fangirling from me for this week. Here is episode 285, featuring the Southern Cs co-founders Whitney Long and Sheree Levy. Enjoy my friends Cherie and Whitney, welcome to She Said. She said, actually, I should say welcome back to She Said, she said

Whitney Long ([06:22](#)):

Thank you. We're happy to be here. Thank

Cheri Leavy ([06:24](#)):

You so much.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([06:25](#)):

Yeah, I am so excited to talk to you both because my experience with the Southern C has been such a positive such an important part of my life over the last few years when I have gotten to know you. And I, I know that listeners have heard my enthusiasm of talking about the organization and about this collaboration series that we've been doing, and they've heard from so many amazing women who are part of the Southern C community. So I thought it was high time that I had you both back. Now that we've been doing this for several years, you joined me back, I think four years ago. You've just celebrated your 10 year anniversary last year, so you're now 11 years into this organization. So let's start by talking about how did the Southern C start

Cheri Leavy ([07:21](#)):

In 2011? Whitney and I had a blog, and I think we kind of started out as collaborators. I mean, if you think about it, we wanted to write about the people in places of the South, and we came together to do it. And I think there's more power in doing something with someone else. You know, we, we brought similar skillsets and we're I know, yeah.

Whitney Long ([07:48](#)):

Okay. Well, and part of how we, when we started speaking to you know, collaborating and working together, we actually had a team of contributors. We called them the C Team <laugh>, and we had people from all over writing about the south. We had a, a contributor who lived in New York. She was a southern ex batch. She was writing about being southern in the city. So we kind of, from the, from the get go out of the gate, had this collaborative spirit where we were pulling people in.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([08:14](#)):

Yeah. How did you two meet? Had you been friends forever and ever, or did you, did you meet through these sort of shared connections?

Whitney Long ([08:23](#)):

So we knew one another before starting the Southern. My husband is from here Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> on St. Simon's as well as Cheri and her husband, and they all went high school together. And so Cheri and I had met after my husband and I started dating. So we had a friendship before forming this other sea.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([08:39](#)):

Yeah. You know, and, and that can present some interesting challenges in the, when you go into business or you start collaborating with someone who's a friend, you know, you don't wanna wreck the relationship. Was there, did you set up any ground rules? Was it clear from the beginning that this was gonna be like a perfect match? Or how did you kind of approach that?

Whitney Long ([09:01](#)):

We just kind of jumped right in <laugh>.

Cheri Leavy ([09:04](#)):

I, I know, and I, you know,

Cheri Leavy ([09:08](#)):

Whitney is this amazing mama bear. I have people come all the time and say, how does she have such accomplished and smart children? You know, what did she do? And like, sometimes I'll joke that she ate at a mommy during her pregnancy, <laugh>, but honestly, I've been the benefactor of her spirit that I think makes, helps them excel. Because I've always felt like, okay, I've got this person, you know, next to me, behind me supporting me and saying, you can do it. If you give it your best effort, that's all you can do. Have faith that it's gonna all work out. And and that's kind of helped us take risk and whatnot, because if you feel like somebody believes in where you can go with something, then you, you know, you go for it. So we, we kind of, you know, we were very, we went for it all right, our first year, 2013, when we started doing events, we approached Southern Living. They became a sponsor for our, we did three in one year. We walked in

Whitney Long ([10:13](#)):

Three in six months. Three in

Cheri Leavy ([10:14](#)):

Six months <laugh>. So,

Laura Cox Kaplan ([10:15](#)):

So, so basically three summits, three sort of semi summits, sort of similar to what we see today. You did three of those in a year.

Whitney Long ([10:24](#)):

Many sound like they were around a hundred people each, so kind of to where we then eventually got to with the around 300. But yes, and you know, what we found is just as much work and effort and time and energy goes into a 100 person event or a 300 person event. But anyway,

Cheri Leavy ([10:41](#)):

But all that to say, so we show up with to Jackie, Jackie Thompson and Libba Osborne's office in Charleston. And we apparently were so passionate about this idea that there was nothing out there for female entrepreneurs, and that we needed to form this community and have these in-person events where we brought together experts that could help us grow our businesses.

Mm-Hmm. It's what we needed, and we couldn't find it. And kind of our blog where we had been connecting with all these folks, and we could tell that geography, you know, people were wanting to connect online, but they wanted to get together in person. So we were like, let's do it. And so we did. We did it quick too.

Whitney Long ([11:26](#)):

Yeah, we did. Thankfully they took us on and they're still with us <laugh>. Yes. Like Kendra. And

Laura Cox Kaplan ([11:33](#)):

They're your PR team. We, I, I have not had Jackie or Libba on the podcast, but we need to do that because they're both amazing gals. They are. But they, they were a PR team. They were a pr pr they're still PR people, but they were in the same firm at the time.

Whitney Long ([11:49](#)):

Yes, yes. And they have been advisory board Brain Trust friends. Yes. Strategic partners through the years. So very thankful about relationship with them.

Cheri Leavy ([12:00](#)):

Yes. And when Kendra Bracken Ferguson was talking about Brain Trust from this stage at this current summit, you know, that's immediately what comes to mind is that type of person. And they've been with us since we started and have, have helped us. And that's, that's an important part of building, right? Something like this too, is putting the right people together. But

Whitney Long ([12:21](#)):

We do, we do laugh and say, because like we said, we rolled into their office probably came in like a hurricane back in 2013, so we're having an event. And they were like, do you have a mission statement? Do you have a logo? We're like, we have none of that <laugh>. But

Cheri Leavy ([12:36](#)):

They, they always say that we're the exact opposite of how they would take a client because we did it backwards. We knew the problem we wanted to solve. And that is,

Whitney Long ([12:46](#)):

But because of that, when you think back to 2013, we were, we laughingly say we're grandmothers in this space, <laugh> at this point, because we've been doing it for so long.

Cheri Leavy ([12:56](#)):

And that's, that's the good part, is now there are a lot more resources for women in business and Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. I'm glad for that. Yeah. And I'm glad that we're able to be this

sort of touchstone that people can come back to again and again year after year, whatever their season might be, whatever they might need. Same with membership. Yeah. For us I love that we can be, we call our everybody that's attended an alum, and so it's much like that collegiate feeling of we are here for you forever. Right.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([13:30](#)):

It's very much a community. It is the spirit of community. And I, I use that term largely because I don't have another one. And I feel like community is kind of overused. Everybody talks about creating community, but that's really what you're talking about. Maybe if we could dig into that topic just a little bit, and for anybody listening who is not part of the Southern C, who or who, you know, foolishly has not had the <laugh> spent their money and, and, and, and come with us on this amazing journey but maybe share some thoughts on best practices as it relates to building a community in whatever space you happen to be in, why that matters, how you do that.

Whitney Long ([14:13](#)):

I think knowing your community, obviously that's important, but because we are our community, that's been helpful for us in building it. We feel like we know what they want to hear, what, you know, what they, the topics, the speakers, kind of where they are in their journey, because we're entrepreneurs too. So we're kind of learning and growing together. So by knowing what we are needing and wanting, that usually translates what our community is wanting and needing as well.

Cheri Leavy ([14:42](#)):

And the beauty of having membership now, we started that right before covid, and it really became critical during covid. Yes. That need for community. Like, I had so many friends that were not busy, but we were busy. We were on Zoom all the time trying to help people, you know, save their businesses. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> basically small businesses. And so I think, you know, a lot of times we're, we're good listeners, so we'll hear what's going on for folks. And then we like to facilitate problem solving. We don't have all the answers, but we'll go find out who does. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So there's a lot of we both have a natural ability kind of to match, make in that way. Like, okay, here's the problem. Let's go find an expert in the field or industry and match 'em together. And, you know, that's just a passion.

Whitney Long ([15:33](#)):

And we are still a small team, and so that allows us to be nimble and to adjust programming, to tweak to, you know, change a topic if we feel like something more relevant has come up or more timely. So being nimble is, is a good part. A big part I would say of our community.

Cheri Leavy ([15:49](#)):

Yeah.

Whitney Long ([15:50](#)):

Help.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([15:51](#)):

You said a couple things that I think are really important to reinforce listening is one, like under really understanding your community, but also being willing to really listen to what their pain points are, what their needs are, those sorts of things. And you two are incredibly good at that. And so open to hearing feedback and suggestions and thoughts, and so that's really powerful. But Cherie, you said something else that I think folks would be really interested in. I believe you said that the membership part of the Southern C actually was, was later. Like, it, you didn't start with a membership organization. You started with an event to bring people together. Maybe talk a little bit about the evolution of the business from that standpoint and why you immediately saw that the membership option was, or membership opportunity was important

Cheri Leavy ([16:42](#)):

Because it was hard to wait from one event to the next to get that the education and the inspiration to keep it going. I mean, we were talking about as a team, that kind of creative desert, you know, you can feel isolated alone in your business. And this, the membership really provided like 24 7. I mean, you should see there are times in our membership where I feel like we're a busier help desk than, you know, Shopify's support call thing. You know, because they might ask us before they ask Shop Shopify and another, and another member answers the question. I mean, you see it all from like, who, who are you using for bridal registry from a retail shop owner? You see people. So we have so many startups all the way up to very seasoned businesses over 20 years old. So there's such a circle of support and it, and that was needed. And that's why we did the membership, was so that we could have, now we have a membership app. So it's literally at your fingertips.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([17:45](#)):

And, and it gave you a constant revenue stream too, right?

Cheri Leavy ([17:48](#)):

Yes.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([17:49](#)):

I mean, and I would assume that would be pretty relevant as you know, again, it's not, it's not the only piece of the business, but that's a really important consideration too.



Cheri Leavy ([17:59](#)):

Yeah. We were very seasonal and that was stressful for us. And so that also helps us relate to our members and our alums is, okay, we've got, so we needed to figure out how to cover that operating budget. And so the closer you can get to those kinds, I mean, you know, there were, we, we try to encourage people we're like, you don't necessarily make money in those first years of business. You, you're the last one to get paid. And so I think having gone through that, it's very important because we feel what they're feeling.

Whitney Long ([18:30](#)):

Right. Again, our pain points are oftentimes pain points that there our members in community are going through. But our timing with membership, we were just very fortunate because we did start the membership component not long before Covid hit. And then it became a lifeline for members in our community. You know, I mean, our, remember our very first Zoom call once schools closed, not our very, well, our very first Zoom with the Covid situation, but was about how to continue to work while your kids are at home in homeschooling, because we had a couple members that did that. We had one lead this who have been doing it. So we really, again, just tried to listen and seek out what those pain points are and then meet them in that moment.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([19:10](#)):

Yeah. As you look back over the last 11 years, and you think back to sort of stories of impact and ways that just the existence of the Southern C and this network and this community have made a difference in your members' lives, are there any stories that spring to mind or examples that you can think of that you're like, wow, that is really sort of a powerful data point for the importance of this concept of community and collaboration and the existence of a group like this?

Cheri Leavy ([19:45](#)):

Caroline Bramlett Broom came her senior year. She's with LCB style. She had started her blog, I believe, during maybe her freshman or sophomore year in college. And she came her senior year to the Southern C. Her mom was there with her and taking photos. She was so lovely, jumped in the spirit, connected with so many folks that, that she had admired for years. And she was just so open. You have to be so open and you also have to put yourself out there. And she did those things. And she came back again and again year after year. And so when we watch her growth, she became her photography became really outstanding and she started doing photography for other brands in the Southern C. And then now she did a collaboration with Guru for a capsule of clothing. Her dream come true, she's been sewing since she was super young is she's doing her own line, Tilly, and it's about to launch. So for someone like that, that's a startup we watched from the very beginning. And like we said earlier, there's seasoned



business owners that we've watched Grow and Blossom to in other ways. But I think stories like that, where you watch her use this as a touch point year after year and her community to help her grow, and you watch her show, show off collaborations and they tend to be with Southern C folks. Yeah.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([21:09](#)):

And, and just, you know, the willingness to make that investment year over year in building your community and really deepening your understanding. I think Caroline is a really great example of that. She's a great one to highlight because she is such an open, just candid, lovely, lovely person who's really easy to talk to, who's really open I think

Cheri Leavy ([21:33](#)):

Bumped right into her wedding, which again was here at Sea Island, which she found Sea Island through the Southern C, and it was in the wedding, was one of our team members. Yeah. And you know, that she'd met at the Southern C. I mean, it's,

Whitney Long ([21:46](#)):

It's a small Southern C world, <laugh>, <laugh>. But I do think, you know, the example with LCB, it's just once she officially, which should be any day, releases this new clothing line that she's doing, she's got built in brand advocates and supporters and friends from our community. Yeah. And that's so cool to see how our community supports one another. They're the first one to like a post on Instagram to comment, to share you know, to then consume the product, to order the Yeah. The dresses that she's putting out. But it really is so neat to see how our community supports one another.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([22:22](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I absolutely love that. Maybe if you had to, if you thought about the membership and you think about recognizing that there is about 10% or so of the community that are male, but for the most part it's 90% female entrepreneurs who, who are creative or have some kind of creative element of their, of their business, and a very southern aesthetic as you describe it. But as you look across your membership and you see new folks coming in, can you point to some particular areas, particular pain points, if you will, that you see pretty consistently?

Cheri Leavy ([23:00](#)):

I think it's probably in the HR and building out the team and knowing when you can afford to take those risks. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, whether it's some as large as, you know, passing the torch to a CEO and you becoming the founder. Yeah. That's

Laura Cox Kaplan ([23:19](#)):

Tough.

Cheri Leavy ([23:20](#)):

And stepping back at that stage, or whether it's just, you know, an earlier stage of, of building out. And I, I think that is a particular pain point that gets discussed a good bit. And I think that's why you're seeing these days so many fractional CEOs and fractional CFOs and that kind of thing to sort of ease into that team, team building out.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([23:44](#)):

Yeah. So it's, so, it, there's sort of normal growing pains, right. With any kind of growth that you have. It's a great opportunity and it's very exciting, but at the same time, it's hard and there's a lot of uncertainty that goes with it. And knowing how to navigate that, I think that's such a, that's such a great point, Cherie, to, to really emphasize the fact that, you know, there, there is so much positive that comes from growth and the evolution of your business, but it doesn't mean it's not gonna be really hard.

Cheri Leavy ([24:10](#)):

Right.

Whitney Long ([24:11](#)):

Right. And we've had several webinars on this topic through our membership and, you know, we take those calls and so the beauty of that is you can go back and listen again, and then within those calls we'll have that peer-to-peer support, people sharing what they've done, how they handle growing pains, that sort of thing. So you're getting the thought leader or the industry expert voice, but also then you're hearing from your fellow

Cheri Leavy ([24:37](#)):

Members. And a lot of times they, they springboard. So then we hear, okay, I think I am ready to take on investors, so what does that look like? So then we go have, you know, an angel investor, come on and talk about the process with that. Or we, you talk about finding a, a partner or finding another business to collaborate with that could help you go to that next level. And so we usually, usually one, one session on stage or one session in membership leads to another. Right. 'cause You're just trying to get more information. Yeah. More expertise. And what's great is all our presenters on Zoom and on stage are welcomed into this community, but they are also asked to not just talk to us, but talk with us and continue that conversation. So I think there's a, a knowledge with with all of our community that if you're gonna come in, you better be ready to also take a <laugh>, a text or a DM or a email from somebody and pay it forward. Yeah. You know what it is, you know, and you're gonna learn too. That's the

Laura Cox Kaplan ([25:50](#)):

Beauty. Yeah. Yeah. Well, and, and it probably, I mean, at least I think if you're not willing to share at that level this, it's probably not the right, the right group for you. Right. I mean, if you're not somebody who's sort of will, you know, ready to be part of that community, then it's probably not the right fit. You, you mentioned a moment ago, Whitney, I think that there is a library of resources that you guys capture. May maybe talk a little bit about that and how, and how that's a helpful part of your, of the, of the membership model.

Whitney Long ([26:23](#)):

Yep. So that is part of our membership model, and we record the weekly calls and we have this massive video vault that just, I mean, talk about a rabbit hole, but it's a great place to house all these webinars. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. But yeah. And we find that people, our members go back to that over and over and over. You know, they, there's one member, she says she likes to get on her treadmill. She listens to, you know, the past videos that maybe she couldn't catch in person. Someone else was like, that's when I'm cleaning the house and dusting and just kind of making up the beds. So anyway, that's just a great way to continue that learning element 24 7 by, by the video vault we have.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([27:00](#)):

Yeah. And, and there's no, no extra charge for that. I'm sorry, Cherie, there's no extra charge for that, that's all included in your membership.

Whitney Long ([27:06](#)):

Membership.

Cheri Leavy ([27:06](#)):

Yeah. But we have one member Gina Saunders, and she owns bridal registry and gift shop in Lakeland, Florida, and jewelry as well, gains Jewelers. And she will wrap folks presents and listen <laugh>, she's like in her shop, wrapping presents listening. But it's a, it's a way to solve a problem. You can, we've got it where it's searchable, so you can type in whatever the topic is you know, with whatever's going on with you at that moment. And it's, it's really relevant that way. Just great. Yeah.

Whitney Long ([27:41](#)):

Yeah. And we, we see people, you know, accessing it that way. If they're not able to hop on the call that day, then they're listening to it over the weekend kind of thing.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([27:51](#)):

Yeah. What you guys do it, the very nature of it is very creative. It's obviously very collaborative as, as we have been talking about. But maybe talk a little bit about one of my favorite topics, which is this idea of creativity and how you fuel and reinvigorate and recharge your creativity when you're just sort of running on fumes. Talk about kind of what you do and how you think about this idea of creativity.

Whitney Long ([28:19](#)):

Well, I think for us, it's probably easier than most because we are surrounded by so many creatives that it's just our fuel every day. You know, we don't have to look far to be inspired because that's who our group is, is creative entrepreneurs. So that is very fulfilling. And I think it just kind of keeps us excited as far as programming and topics and what the event looks like and how we tweak it and how we make membership work more for our community. So yeah, our, our community inspires us

Cheri Leavy ([28:51](#)):

For sure. Wi Whitney was a scout for magazines before, so <laugh>, you know, she'll, she'll go down a rabbit hole doing some research and sharing and whatnot. So you know, I feel like we both have a good pulse on what is new. Like, we can sense where people are going with things. So I think we're constantly kind of chasing, and not that our mission always stays the same because we understand who this group is, but I think we're always trying to make sure we can bring them what they need and want. And I think we see, yeah, see the creativity as it's coming to Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And we live in a beautiful place, and we read and listen to podcasts. Yes. <Laugh>

Laura Cox Kaplan ([29:40](#)):

Like she said, she said <laugh>. Yes. You know, one of the beautiful things about your, your your partnership and what you've created is just the strength of your relationship with the two of you, and the fact that you both bring really unique skillsets and you know, what we talk about on this podcast a lot. Transferable skills, the things that you were doing before and finding new ways to deploy them. Maybe let's talk just for a minute about what you guys were doing before and kind of how you utilize those skills differently and sort of what your strengths and weaknesses are as this partnership team.

Whitney Long ([30:18](#)):

Yeah. Well, Cherie just mentioned that I'd worked with several magazines as a field editor, scout, writer. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And I mean, that just feels kinda like the natural evolution now, looking at what the Southern C is to what we're doing. Yeah. But I feel like just the research brain, the digging in the the, the planning it out has all been helpful for what I, we together do at the Southern C. And then Sheri has a similar background in the magazine

newspaper world. So I feel like our skill sets are very compatible. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and our strengths too.

Cheri Leavy ([30:52](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, I taught English first, and so I,

Laura Cox Kaplan ([30:56](#)):

I did not know that

Cheri Leavy ([30:58](#)):

That is a lot of that desire to bring in the education and Uhhuh and whatnot. So

Whitney Long ([31:05](#)):

Teach and also a nurturing spirit, <laugh>, because it's a special person to be a school teacher.

Cheri Leavy ([31:10](#)):

And then we did, I did the literary magazine at, at for the high school and then now in magazine and News publishing. And so I think a lot of the storytelling, the marketing, the advertising, what we try to do for our community is it, it's comes naturally. And then I was always placed any board of directors I've ever sat on, I've always been on either the event <laugh> chair or development. So I think, I think our skillset sets were Yeah. <Laugh>, they're all in this, right? Yeah.

Whitney Long ([31:46](#)):

Yeah. And that's a good point because, you know, both having done stuff in the community, chairing different events, it's Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> a lot of overlap <laugh> with what those skills are. <Laugh>.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([31:55](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Let's talk for a minute about what's coming up next and some of the things that you're excited about and have rolling, rolling out over the next year or so.

Cheri Leavy ([32:05](#)):

We've coming up to Texas.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([32:08](#)):

Maybe maybe talk a little bit about how that differs from the regular summit and the, you know, regular calls and all of that.

Cheri Leavy ([32:14](#)):

So it's a smaller group. It's 150 total. And Texas round time is very special. It's a little more casual. The quality of education is similar, like we, the the level of presenters, the the way we tackle the topics. So there'll be educational sessions, and then the same kind of Mary making and Revelry comes along with having everybody connect. Our joke is, instead of sip Shop being Oceanside, it's, it's in a, on a, with a field with bales of hay <laugh>, we, we

Whitney Long ([32:51](#)):

Laughingly say from resort to ranch <laugh>. Yeah. We're resort Love it at the ranch. Love it.

Cheri Leavy ([32:57](#)):

And we have a great group that helps us host Katie Botter with Potter Ranch and Frenchy and

Whitney Long ([33:04](#)):

Kristen White and talk about collaborations. I mean, they came to the summit in 22, no, no, no, 21, no, 22 because we did it that fall of

Cheri Leavy ([33:17](#)):

22 <laugh>. You

Whitney Long ([33:17](#)):

Did it that fall. Okay. Yeah. So that came 22. And one of them, Katie got up on the microphone and she was asking the question to a presenter during the q and a, but she mentioned what she did. So we're kind of in the back and her ears are perking up. She said,

Cheri Leavy ([33:32](#)):

You know, boutique, she tea

Whitney Long ([33:34](#)):

Coattail on round

Cheri Leavy ([33:34](#)):

Top. So of course, typical fashion, we totally turn and look at each other. And then we're

Whitney Long ([33:39](#)):

Like, and I'm Googling <laugh> the last day. We're kind of milling around after it's ended. And, you know, Katie came up and we were saying Bye, and she's like, we really should talk later. I'm like, give us two weeks to decompress and let's set up a call. And we did that. And then that

same year in September of 22 is when we went to Round Top. But yeah, I mean, it's a great collaboration, a great friendship.

Cheri Leavy ([34:02](#)):

Our Texas membership and participation was growing, so we thought, let's go to them Right. And kind of mix it up a little. Yeah. Which has been great. Right.

Whitney Long ([34:13](#)):

And in the so many round, I mean, obviously there's a lot of Texans there, but it's also, you know, a great mix from other states as well.

Cheri Leavy ([34:22](#)):

Our joke is, our largest demographics are Texas and Charleston <laugh>.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:30](#)):

We could, you could do a lot worse.

Cheri Leavy ([34:32](#)):

<Laugh> the biggest state.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([34:36](#)):

Any any parting words of advice? I mean, we've heard from, you know, a lot of really incredible talent who are part of this network who have joined me here on She Said, she Said podcast, and we've been promoting that through the Southern C. Maybe any parting advice that you might have for the audience who's listening. Right.

Whitney Long ([35:00](#)):

I think, you know, you said earlier that community can be an overused or buzzword, but I really feel like people need to consider the importance of community personally, professionally, because it's gonna help you grow in both areas. And just seek that community out. I, I know Sheree had mentioned earlier about the creativity desert, which, you know, is much like the food desert that we hear about, kind of a topic that we hear a lot. But, you know, the beauty of our Zoom world now is that you can have that human connection face to face, I mean online, but then it is just that community feeling and spirit and the comradery is gonna help in all areas of your life. So really embrace community. I feel like that was rambling so bad. <Laugh>.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([35:45](#)):

No, I loved what you just said.



Whitney Long ([35:48](#)):

Come back to where

Laura Cox Kaplan ([35:49](#)):

I to No, I love that. I love that. And I totally agree with you. I, and I think sometimes it is because the term is, is used so much, and I think there is a real longing on the part of so many people who for various reasons have feel a bit disconnected, you know, disconnected from their communities, they haven't found their people. It's hard to sort of tap in. Finding that community and really engaging and investing in it is so important.

Whitney Long ([36:18](#)):

I do feel like community can fill a void and it, it's just gets you to a deeper connection.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([36:25](#)):

Yeah.

Whitney Long ([36:26](#)):

And I think we are probably all craving that now in this Zoom world, you know? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>,

Cheri Leavy ([36:30](#)):

Like, it's so fun to be at the membership event at Southern C, or right when the Southern C launches and see people connecting. They've met online and then they're meeting in real life and they're so excited to see each

Whitney Long ([36:44](#)):

Other. And I always, so

Cheri Leavy ([36:45](#)):

It's, and it, they feed each other that way.

Whitney Long ([36:48](#)):

And I said several times through the years, it just, it's like a high school reunion that you wanna attend <laugh>, you know, I mean, I personally like high school reunions and family reunions. Most people don't. I do, but

Laura Cox Kaplan ([36:58](#)):

Arguably is better <laugh>.

Whitney Long ([37:01](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. You know, it's just that excitement when you see someone that you haven't seen in real life right far, you have seen them and met them, but it's just been a while in between those face-to-face times together. And again, our community, oh my gosh. It's just so incredibly supportive to one another. And I feel like with the summit, it's one of those things, once you go, you know, Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, you get it once you attend, it's hard to explain. You can get our emails, you can follow us on social and get the overall viewpoint, but until you're actually there in the heart of the community and that feeling, it's just, it's, it's special and it's hard to Yeah. Explain.

Cheri Leavy ([37:42](#)):

I've, I've had folks like Blair Kin from Blair's Belts this, she grabbed my hand at the mentor lunch and she said, you've been telling me to come to this for years, <laugh>, now I get it, <laugh>. And she was like, looking around, you know, at 275 ladies, and you're marveling at, okay, I've got this group championing me through every step of the way now. And it's back to that feeling of confidence that Lydia Fette, you know, tells us too. It's like, you know,

Laura Cox Kaplan ([38:13](#)):

What has this sort of last 11 years meant for you and stories like that where people come up to you and say, you know, this experience and this community has been really life changing. It's changed my business, but it's, but it's been enriching for me as a person. What, what does that mean to you?

Whitney Long ([38:29](#)):

I mean, it's humbling. You know, because this idea that we had 10 years ago, see where it's, where it is now, what it's grown into, it's this living, thriving community. And I mean, it gives me chills every time. It really does. And I think it's been neat for me too. I'll be out, we'll be on vacation, we'll be out locally. We against Southern C World is so small, <laugh>, but I'll be out with the family and someone will come up and they're an alum and, you know, they'll say stuff, they'll share something like that, what the Southern C has meant to them. And I love my kids seeing that and hearing that, and my daughter especially. But, you know, they've seen me working at home all these years and they've seen the late nights and the laughs and the tears and everything that goes along with owning your own business. But I think it's, for me, very humbling to hear someone, you know, say something like that to us. But it's also very rewarding because I love that they see what all the hard work has ended up doing and being I love

Laura Cox Kaplan ([39:32](#)):

That. Yeah.

Cheri Leavy ([39:33](#)):

And it's, it's so hard to articulate what it's all about because it is an attitude, a feeling a way you come to the group and there's a lot of kindness but it's still, it's not fluff because there is a lot of business and a and a lot of of inspiration and a lot of folks that have made the path before you. And so, but maybe they have something that they need to learn from a newbie. Maybe they need to be reinigorated on their path. I just think all of it is just so beautiful.

Whitney Long ([40:12](#)):

And it's interesting how we have had a lot of our presenters from cities, you know, New York, la, wherever they are blown away by the transparency level. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, because, you know, they're like, nobody's holding things tight to their chest. They're willing to share all the tips, all the tactics, all the takeaways, all the insight that peer-to-peer support, which you don't get that everywhere, but it's, I mean, it's kind of like the summit, pixie dust. You know, people come like Char said it, with the right attitude and mindset to share and to pour into one another, peer to peer. And then, you know, it's something we like to call, it's the magic in the hallways. It's where you're kind of having those water cooler moments and they're authentic.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([40:57](#)):

Yeah. I love that. I love you both. I am so grateful that you spent a little bit of time with me. I have loved this latest series and gotten so much great feedback from listeners on it. And it is, you know, in large part due to the two of you. So I am so grateful and love that you're part of my life and that I get to share you with our listeners.

Whitney Long ([41:20](#)):

We love that we get to connect and collaborate and create with you. It's been such a neat thing to have you doing this series after the last, I guess, what is this, the third year?

Laura Cox Kaplan ([41:30](#)):

Yeah, third

Whitney Long ([41:31](#)):

Year. Because you attended virtually Yes. The first time, right?

Laura Cox Kaplan ([41:34](#)):

I did, I did. During Covid I attended virtually. Yeah. And then I've attended the past three.

Whitney Long ([41:40](#)):

That's really cool. But yeah, the, the series, I mean, oh, I love it. So good. And it's a treat for us after Summit to be able to listen to those. We, we listened to them when we're doing the same thing. Treadmill, <laugh>, <inaudible>, <inaudible>, all the stuff. Type an email, <laugh>.

Speaker 4 ([42:00](#)):

I love it. All right. Thank you both so much.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([42:04](#)):

Friend, thanks so much for joining me today for episode 285, part of Our Southern C. She said, she said podcast collaboration series. I don't know about you, but I feel incredibly inspired having this conversation. I hope that if you've not found the community that really helps you bring forth your unique potential that you'll set about to find that. And I'd love to hear what your experience is on that journey. I'd also love to know what your experience has been with the Southern C. So share your feedback my way. I'd love to hear also, which parts of this conversation really resonated most deeply with you. You can send your feedback to me. There's a link in the show notes where you can do that. But you can also just message me on Instagram, which I love. I love hearing from you. Or you can leave a few thoughts in a review of this episode.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([43:02](#)):

Those reviews really help us tell the algorithm that she said, she said Podcast is something of value to you, and I would be incredibly grateful. So thanks in advance for that friend until I was gonna say until next week, but I'm actually taking a couple of weeks off. I don't know if you can tell, but I have sort of some raspiness in my chest. And I developed walking pneumonia, which I have been kind of struggling to get past for the past well over a month. Actually since the Southern C Summit. I clearly had too much fun. So I'm gonna take a couple weeks to recuperate. I'm going off on spring break with my kiddos, and I will be sharing a bit about our journey to the extent that my children allow it. And I'll share that with you on Instagram.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([43:53](#)):

So for the next couple of weeks, we will be in reruns. And remember, you can go back and listen to all of the episodes in this collaboration series with She Said, she Said Podcast and The Southern C. I have gathered those all together. You can find them on Instagram or wherever you listen to podcast, and I hope that you will take us along wherever your Spring break plans may take you. And on behalf of She Said, she Said Podcast and The Southern C, thanks for making this little investment in you. Take care, friend, and I'll talk to you again real soon.