

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

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Justin Prochnow ([00:26](#)):

Hello and welcome to Legal Food Talk. I'm your host, Justin Prochnow, a shareholder in the Denver office of the international law firm, Greenburg Traurig. And this is a podcast brought to you by our food, beverage, an agribusiness practice, to give you some insights and knowledge about the world of food, beverage and agribusiness.

Mike N. ([00:51](#)):

Good morning fellow equestrians. My name is Mike [Nicodema 00:00:54], a shareholder in GT's litigation group, and one of the founders of GT's equine industry practice. Welcome to another edition of the equine group's podcast. I'll be in the irons today with a very special guest and a very special friend. Here are just some of the accomplishment of this very special lady.

Mike N. ([01:12](#)):

In 2012, she earned the title of Miss Florida USA. She's a third generation jeweler, certified gemologist, and a jewelry designer. She is a horse enthusiast and advocates for introducing children to the healing powers of horses through her association with the Horses Healing Hearts charity. She is a successful entrepreneur and the creator of the popular Huggable Hooves and Horse LUV jewelry collections. She has been voted one of the top three equestrian jewelers by Equestrian Living magazine. She and her husband, Dr. Curtis Emmer, are proud parents of their beautiful four year old daughter, Chloe, and earlier this year, in all her spare time, she's opened up her second jewelry store in Palm Beach, Florida. She's a close family friend, a GT client, and the owner of Karina Brez Jewelry, Ms Karina Brez. Good morning, Karina. Thanks for doing this with us today.

Karina Brez ([02:08](#)):

Good morning. Good morning. Thank you so much for having me on your podcast.

Mike N. ([02:13](#)):

You and I know each other a long time, and no matter how long I know you, whenever I talk to you, I learn something new. So, I'd like to get the listeners to know a little bit about your journey and how you became one of the best jewelers in the business. So, I guess we should start by asking what led you to become a designer of equestrian jewelry.

Karina Brez ([02:36](#)):

So, I became inspired to combine my love for horses and jewelry, and put the two worlds together, my two passions. And I always say that my jewelry collection is a byproduct of happiness and passion for equestrian sports that I have.

Mike N. ([02:55](#)):

Now, very few of us succeed in life on our own. I know I didn't. I had a lot of help along the way. Was there anyone in particular that helped you on your journey and helped you get to where you are?

Karina Brez ([03:08](#)):

Absolutely. Definitely my parents. Both my mom and dad, Alex and Lima, they've just been a driving force in my entire life. They're hard workers. They started from the ground up. We both immigrated here to this country, and from the day that I started walking and talking, I've watched my parents and been inspired by their hard work ethic. And I feel like they've instilled that into me. And I have that passion because of my parents. And so, they are definitely 110%, if that's possible, if not more, the driving force behind my passion, being an entrepreneur and being in this industry.

Mike N. ([03:50](#)):

I don't think we can underestimate the value parents have in our lives. It's just incredible. All right, Karina, let's talk about your two signature designs, Huggable Hooves and Horse LUV. Now, my wife, Natalie, proudly wears her Huggable Hooves bracelet pretty much everywhere she goes, except the barn. I know it's a little challenging. We don't have photos, we don't have video, but can you tell us what inspired those designs and what some of the unique features are?

Karina Brez ([04:22](#)):

So, I created the Huggable Hooves bracelet to pretty much have your horse hug you back. Horses and humans have had a connection for so many centuries, and I just thought it would be nice to have the horse hug you back. Having that wearable hug is just a representation of the love that horses have for us and we have for them. And I thought it would be incredible to have something that's very simplistic and almost like an optical illusion.

Karina Brez ([04:53](#)):

So, I made these bracelets where it's the two horse hooves wrapping your wrist, but yet they're not over the top, in your face equestrian. I have a lot of clients that wear them that are not equestrians, but they love the symbolism that they represent. And the detail of work inside the bracelet, there's hand engraving of inside the horseshoe. And then there's a horseshoe that has no grain around it, and diamonds along the edges. And they're very easy to put on and take off, and I do have clients that wear them while riding. So, we do have a secure clasp that we put on some of the larger ones, so that they don't fall off while you ride.

Karina Brez ([05:33](#)):

And my Horse LUV collection that I created, it's pretty much two horses in the shape of a heart, and there's so many different meanings behind it. I have many people who say, "Oh, it's like husband and wife, or two kids, or two horses." So, there's a lot of symbolism behind it and everyone can have their own interpretation of that. And I love that design because it's almost like an optical illusion. It looks like a heart when you first look at it, and the more you look at it, you see two horses forming in a silhouette.

Karina Brez ([06:05](#)):

And it's also a very popular design that I've created. It was one of my first designs, and probably one of my favorites. We have a whole collection between earrings, rings, bracelets, necklaces, from minis to mediums, to larges. And they come in every color. Rose gold, white gold, and yellow gold. And I use VS quality diamonds, GH color, and all my pieces are made 18 karat gold.

Mike N. ([06:32](#)):

You know, Karina, it's so true, what you say about the relationship between horses and humans. I like to tell the folks in my group, horses and humans have had this unique, this special, this cosmic relationship, since there's been horses and humans, and your designs are certainly emblematic of that relationship. They're just terrific.

Mike N. ([06:53](#)):

All right, one of the ways in which GT's equine industry group serves equestrians is intellectual property law. And that's not always something that's top of mind for equestrians. A lot of them don't know what that is. They don't know how they can benefit from it. Now, I know we've helped you obtain some copyrights and trademarks on Huggable Hooves and Horse LUV. Can you tell our listeners why you decided to obtain that type of intellectual property, and how they've helped your business?

Karina Brez ([07:22](#)):

Absolutely. I mean, you guys have helped my business tremendously. I've created these pieces and it took a lot of sweat equity to get to this point, and not having my intellectual property protected, first of all, I would've been disappointed, but it could also hurt my business, considering all the effort in the design and the creativity that went into creating this product.

Mike N. ([07:47](#)):

And I know you've put years and years of effort into these products and they've evolved over time into the special brands that they are. I mean, is that fair?

Karina Brez ([07:56](#)):

Absolutely. And not only that, but I have been at the Equestrian Center for over 10 years, and I have first knowledge of product that sells. So, I create pieces that I know will sell. If it's a great design, I continue growing on that design and creating more and more pieces from that. Things that aren't as popular might make a little one off here or there, but I like to test the market anytime I make a new design. And especially having these unique designs that I've invented, sort of to say, I'd like to have a copyright in them and a trademark. And I'm definitely, definitely grateful to having you guys help me with that. Because I'd be sad if someone took my designs and took that away from me.

Mike N. ([08:44](#)):

You appreciate that, Karina. We are certainly there for you and your designs are just top of the charts. I can't say enough good things about them. So, at the beginning of this podcast, I was listening to some of your professional achievements and there are many. One thing that I think our listeners would be interested in, that maybe they don't know from their everyday lives, is what is a certified gemologist? You are a gemologist and you're also a certified gemologist. What is a gemologist and how do you become certified? Because I'm sure it's not that easy.

Karina Brez ([09:20](#)):

So, a graduate gemologist, you go to a school for GAA, and you take other courses besides gemology. You can go to an appraisal school and become a member. So, I became a member of the National Association of Jewelry Appraisers. Although that term certified is very loosely used in the industry, there is not one particular institution that actually certifies you. But becoming a graduate gemologist does give you that diploma to say that you are a graduate gemologist. And then, after, you can continue your education going to different designations, different appraisal associations, where they have their own

designation after that. So, I'm a member of the National Association of Jewelry Appraisers, so that's my other designation, after just being a graduate gemologist.

Mike N. ([10:14](#)):

Okay. And I know you've put years and years and years of hard work into this, and it certainly paid off. Here's something that I think was really interesting. I read that one of the most famous emerald mines in the world is located in a Muzo, Columbia. It's called the Muzo Mine. And you visited that mine in 2016, and had quite an interesting experience there. Now, not many of us get to see an emerald mine, the operations anyway, up close and personal. Can you tell our listeners about the trip and what resonated most for you?

Karina Brez ([10:48](#)):

Oh, absolutely. It was honestly a trip of a lifetime. The chance that I actually got to go into Columbia. We took a helicopter into the mines, flew in. The sites everywhere, it's just beautiful. Everything's so green. When you fly into Columbia, all of the trees are just so lush and green that, when you go into the mines, it's interesting that there's emeralds. They're in there, green. Everything's just so green there. So, I loved it.

Karina Brez ([11:17](#)):

But it was awesome to see the mine to market process. And you got to meet the workers who were there every day, who were mining these emeralds. And we got to see the entire mining process. We actually went into the mine. I don't remember how many feet underground we went, but let's just say we got into a golf cart and we went pretty far down. Well, first we took an elevator to one of the mines, and then we got into a golf cart and then we kept going down. And then we crawled into an area that they were digging for emeralds. And it's a manual labor. There's not any technology that digs for you. There's machines, but people have to do it by hand because you could really ruin the emeralds.

Karina Brez ([12:03](#)):

So, it was interesting to see that. And after we finished going into the mines, we ended up going to the cutting center, which is a little bit offsite. After they mine the stones, they sent it to their cutting center, and we got to see all the rough that they work with on a daily basis. And we got to look at the different qualities of emeralds, from inexpensive emeralds to the most expensive emeralds.

Karina Brez ([12:29](#)):

And it was just really interesting to see the entire process, literally, from buying to market. And people don't realize how much work it actually takes to get a stone that's in your finished piece of jewelry. So, I just found it very interesting.

Mike N. ([12:49](#)):

And something so beautiful comes out of the ground, and you saw it from the very beginning up until it hits the store. It's just amazing.

Karina Brez ([12:58](#)):

Yeah.

Mike N. ([13:00](#)):

Let's shift a little bit. Let's talk about the pandemic for a moment, because pretty much all equestrians, riders, trainers, owners, vendors, show promoters, they all face significant challenges. Canceled shows, no crowds. When the shows reopened, limited crowds. I know it affected your business. It affects everyone's business. But how did you adapt?

Karina Brez ([13:25](#)):

Well, we took time off. I mean, everyone had to take time off. The Center was shut down in the middle of my busiest season. I came home and I just thought to myself, "How can I improve my business?" There was a lot of time on my hands, and I decided to go more social media, to completely revamp my entire website. I designed a couple new collections. We're currently in the process of finishing them. I have them, but I have not named them yet, so I can't really talk about them yet until we get the legal department and trademarking the name. But I've created a whole new line.

Karina Brez ([14:04](#)):

And it takes anywhere between 10 to 12 months to create a new collection. But I was able to create a collection, and we added more to the Huggable Hooves line. We added more to the Horse LUV collection. But I took the time to rebrand and I added a new location in Palm Beach, which is great because I got a great deal for this space. So, I was happy. Because a lot of brick and mortar stores are pretty much going all online. I'm old school and I like to have a hands-on approach with my jewelry. You have to see it. You have to feel it. So I definitely like having that aspect of my business, and we do online as well.

Karina Brez ([14:51](#)):

So, we've definitely revamped the website, so that people can shop online. The other thing that we added, we added more shows. So, we started traveling to a couple more shows. We're doing Cowboy Christmas in Vegas this year, and we did the Washington International Horse Show this year and the Tryon International Equestrian Center. So, we didn't sit still. We just kept going, going, going, as much as we can, as long as there's a horse show somewhere. So, that's how I adapted, sort of say, after the pandemic, if that's the question.

Mike N. ([15:25](#)):

Yeah. And those are the words. You didn't sit still. Because when with the pandemic, like all of us, you did something. You didn't just wait for things to happen. You went out and made things happen. And no matter what business you're in, we've all had to adapt in our own ways. At the beginning of the pandemic last year, I couldn't go to court and try cases, which is what I do and which is what I love. So, I had a lot more time on my hands and I started thinking out of the box and that's how several of my GT colleagues and I started this equine industry group. Okay, so I wouldn't be really doing a service to this interview, Karina, if I didn't ask you about your work with the Horses Healing Hearts charity. I know it's near and dear to your heart. What is the mission of the charity and how do you two work together?

Karina Brez ([16:14](#)):

So, I started working with a charity before I was even Miss Florida USA. It's a charity that helps children of alcoholics. It's a program from, let's say, the age of six to 18, and these kids, every weekend, are able to go to a sponsored barn and ride horses and do therapy sessions with a coach, to try and lead successful lives. Not to follow into their parents' footsteps.

Karina Brez ([16:48](#)):

And this charity is near and dear to me because we had a friend who lost her life due to an abusive relationship, and she had horses. So, when I started into this charity, my friend, Liz, who started Horses Healing Hearts at the same time, I said, "This is perfect. Let me raise you guys some money." And I went into the meetings and I said, "Listen, let's turn this into much bigger than it is." I think we started with maybe five or six kids, maybe 10 kids at that time, and we grew over 50 kids.

Karina Brez ([17:26](#)):

In the first couple of years, we raised money. We started doing the White White West party. That was our big gala with lot of big donors, and it was just one of those incredible things to see, to change the lives of these kids. And a lot of these kids graduated. They've already turned 18, and they've become mentors themselves in Horses Healing Hearts. And it's great to see these kids growing and having purposeful, successful lives.

Karina Brez ([17:58](#)):

And I absolutely love any charity that has involvement with horses because I love horses, but specifically, children of alcoholics holds a special place in my heart and Horses Healing Hearts, their motto is, "One horse, one day at a time." And I think it's very true. And I absolutely, absolutely would recommend, if you can go on their website, horseshealingheartsusa.org, it's definitely worth a look, and to see how far that charity has come from the time that I started.

Mike N. ([18:37](#)):

Amazing, Karina. I mean, it doesn't get any better than that. Horses Helping Children. Wow. All right. All right, kiddo. We're in the home stretch now. You're a business woman. You're a spouse. You're a mother, and you balance all those roles each and every day. Give our listeners a snapshot, in one day of the life of Karina Brez.

Karina Brez ([19:00](#)):

So, lots of coffee. But sometimes it makes me a little jittery. Because I'm not too good with too much coffee. But I just always say, you get up, you put one foot after another and you just keep going. I start checking emails just to get my brain working in the morning. I do school drop off. I head over to work. Sometimes I run errands here and there, right before work. But I manage everything from selling to appraising, to designing, and the ins and outs of the store.

Karina Brez ([19:31](#)):

And in reality, it's really hard to do everything by yourself, but it's okay if you have a team of people, such as grandparents, a spouse or a nanny to help. So, I always say, ask for help, so that you don't over commit. And I love being a parent. It's so special. So, I always like to have a couple minutes in the morning with my daughter, specifically because, when she's little, those moments, they don't last forever. She's going to grow up and be big. But my mornings with my daughter are super important from the time that I get her dressed and drive to school and drop her off.

Karina Brez ([20:10](#)):

And I just want to make sure that she feels supported and loved, especially having two parents that work full time. And with me traveling and doing a lot of these equestrian shows and traveling around

the country, but she knows. And I think we all embrace the equestrian schedule. Because equestrians are usually off Mondays and Tuesdays, and it's hard because my daughter goes to school Monday through Friday. So weekends are a little off for us, but we've all worked in the household to embrace it and work around it.

Mike N. ([20:44](#)):

I really know what you're saying because when my kids were younger, I traveled a lot more than I do now. But no matter what was going on, I always tried to get home and never missed any of their events, whether it was a ballet recital, a baseball game, or one of my kids' parties. It's just so important. Because the time you have at your kids, it's fleeting, it's short and it's precious. All right, so I know that, along with balancing work and family, you maintain a pretty hectic travel schedule, pretty hectic show schedule. And you hit many of the major equestrian events up and down the East Coast. So, what does a typical show schedule look like for you in any given year?

Karina Brez ([21:27](#)):

So, I usually start my year, January, February, and March, in Wellington, Florida. Then right after, we usually go to Tryon. At some point, we do a popup in Sag Harbor around the Hampton Classic. Then we go back to do the Washington International Horse Show. And after we do that horse show, we come back to Florida and we start the circuit all over again. But now, I can't sleep, so I added a flagship store here in Palm Beach because I have clients that are constantly asking me.

Mike N. ([22:04](#)):

All right, here's the part of the interview where we're going to have a little fun and we're going to call on the universe to guide us. I'm going to put three words out on the table, and for each word, tell me what word immediately comes to mind. Don't think about it. Just let it fly. And then, after that, I'm going to ask you one very special and final question. All right, so here we go. The first word is family.

Karina Brez ([22:31](#)):

Wait, am I supposed to answer what word comes to mind when you say family?

Mike N. ([22:34](#)):

Immediately, yeah.

Karina Brez ([22:35](#)):

Okay. My mom and dad.

Mike N. ([22:37](#)):

All right. Integrity?

Karina Brez ([22:41](#)):

Being a graduate geologist.

Mike N. ([22:43](#)):

And goals?

Karina Brez ([22:45](#)):

Goals. To brand. Well, I have to use one word or can I use a couple?

Mike N. ([22:50](#)):

You could use a couple.

Karina Brez ([22:52](#)):

Okay. To branch out and be in 300 stores.

Mike N. ([22:58](#)):

Wow. Okay. Hopefully, we can help you achieve that.

Karina Brez ([23:01](#)):

Well, you said goals, so I got to aim high, right?

Mike N. ([23:04](#)):

I got you. Sure. All right, I love it. I love it. All right, here's that very special and very last question. You're an entrepreneur. You're successful. You made your way up through the ranks. If you could give one piece of advice to young equestrians coming up through the ranks, dealing with life's choices and wanting to start their own businesses, what would that advice be?

Karina Brez ([23:32](#)):

Well, okay, so there's five basic things that I've relied on in my career, and they seem to work out pretty well for me. Flexibility, major, major, major. You have to be flexible. You have to be able to move around your schedule to accommodate clients or work staff, or just anything that might come out of the blue.

Karina Brez ([23:52](#)):

You need to be able to run the company, be an employee in a moment of need, fill in someone's shoes, as well as being the number one salesperson. And going above and beyond to accommodate a client is super important. For me, examples of flexibility mean going to a client's home to deliver a piece after hours, or having to fill in for an employee that couldn't make it to the store the next day.

Karina Brez ([24:17](#)):

Two, resourcefulness. It is very important running a company. Research the things you need to do or hire the right people to do it for you. Three, positive attitude. Positivity is so contagious and people want to be around others who are positive. Bringing joy to your clients, having a smile on your face, it helps you, your staff, and just bringing good karma so that you can surround yourself, surround your life around it personally and professionally.

Karina Brez ([24:49](#)):

Four, sometimes it is okay to say no. I'm going to repeat that one more time. Sometimes it's okay to say no. Because no one can do everything, and if you try to do everything, you're going to suffer from a burnout. Keep the quality of giving high by giving 150% to what you commit to, but don't dilute it by overcommitting.

Karina Brez ([25:16](#)):

Five, creativity. Creativity is super important if you want to stand out from your competition. Creativity takes on many forms. It can be a design for a new product or an unconventional way of solving a problem. No matter the form, it is essential for growth and expanding one's business.

Mike N. ([25:40](#)):

So, there you have it, young equestrians, five keys to success: flexibility, resourcefulness, positive attitude, sometimes it's okay to say no, and creativity. Great advice for any young entrepreneur and even for old war horses like me, Karina.

Mike N. ([25:57](#)):

It was great to see you, old friend, and thank you for making the second of our equine industry podcast a mighty one. Look forward to seeing you and mom and dad soon. And a big thank you to all the equestrians who tune into this episode. There's more to come, so please tune into the next episode of our equine industry mini series. Thanks, Karina. Thanks, everyone.

Karina Brez ([26:24](#)):

Thank you so much. Thank you for having me, Mike. Thank you.

Mike N. ([26:27](#)):

It was my pleasure. And we'll see you all soon.

Karina Brez ([26:30](#)):

Bye bye.