



FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Hendrix alumna Camille Wrinkle follows her passion for non-profit work from accountant to executive

By Greer Veon

It doesn't take long for banter between a Warrior student and an alumna before the topic shifts to Hendrix.

As I sit with Camille Wrinkle, a Hendrix graduate of the class of 2000, it only takes a few minutes before she brings her Hendrix experience into our conversation.

"I think had I not had that liberal arts education and been able to think about things from all different aspects, there are a lot of areas within this job that I don't know if I would be as able to do as I currently am," Wrinkle said.

Wrinkle sits as the CEO/Executive Director of the Harvest Regional Food Bank, a non-profit organization that works to provide hunger relief to about 60,000 food insecure individuals within its ten-county regional area. The non-profit's warehouse is located near the state line of Texas and Arkansas in our common hometown of Texarkana.

"I'm from Texarkana, but I kind of migrated to Little Rock after I graduated," Wrinkle said. "I was there for several years until about a few years ago, and this opportunity came up to stay in the non-profit world but also stay close to family and be back in the community where I grew up, so it was just a win-win."

The Harvest Regional Food Bank is definitely a win for the community. A large percentage of Arkansans suffer from food insecurity: one in six seek hunger relief, and one in four are children. The organization estimates that it annually serves about 3 million pounds of food via 75 other hunger relief agencies, 62 shelters, and a backpack program for weekend meals that

reaches 25 schools.

"The ongoing job is definitely a rewarding experience," Wrinkle said.

But Wrinkle never initially planned on working as a CEO. She majored in business, and went on to complete the one-year master's degree in accounting. But the Hendrix grad attributes her educational experience, along with participating in Student Council, as preparation for community service work.

"I worked in non-profit pretty much soon after I graduated from school," Wrinkle said. "I did a couple of years in public accounting, and then switched over to non-profit fundraising, so I was in non-profit development for a little over ten years before kind of switching gears and taking the role of executive director. I was already volunteering and I learned that at Hendrix – just that atmosphere of community that I experienced really, I think, lent itself to teaching me to be that kind of person outside college life."

Of course, the Hendrix campus has definitely changed since Wrinkle was a student, which she expressed made her proud to be part of the school's alumni. Yet, while we discussed her Hendrix experience, we found more commonalities than differences.

"There are so many things that have evolved and progressed [at Hendrix] academically, but I still feel like from what I've heard and seen, there is that same community atmosphere of everyone pulling together, everyone feeling like your neighbors," Wrinkle said. "You only have a set group of neighbors there and you have to learn to really pull together for a cause."

This kind of compassion for community is what Wrinkle again claims led her to a successful career path after graduation.

"I owe so much of where I am now to what I gained at Hendrix," Wrinkle said. "I don't know what you can attribute to specifically, but I think it's all of the things pulling together and what you're exposed to and the liberal arts part of things where you're taught to both learn and think outside the box, to be resourceful, and to look at a challenge from different aspects and think of different solutions."

Wrinkle adds that she was a perfect example of being open-minded – a trait Hendrix encourages in its students.

"I wouldn't have even thought to have changed from being in public accounting where I have majored in to switching to non-profit development and fundraising, and starting over in that arena," Wrinkle said. "I don't know that I would've had the confidence to do that, the analytical thinking that 'okay, you know, I want to go into this path.'"

Like any student who thinks about life after Hendrix, I only thought it was fair to get her advice on how to succeed in any kind of career path.

"Get out there and work hard," Wrinkle said. "When it all boils down to it, that's another thing I learned at Hendrix: is to follow through with a project, to keep going, until you get it solved. I would encourage that for any graduate and that you don't have to end your career in the field where you started."