

Kirt Jacobs: Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

(music)

Kirt Jacobs: Welcome to Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and allow them a chance to offer some keen insights into how they see themselves and most importantly explore just what makes them tick. I'm Kirt Jacobs host of Leadership Landscape where previous interviews have included former mayors, state politicians, nationally renowned sports writers, heads of business concerns, community activists and developers. Today our guest is Dr Whitney F. Jones. He is the founder of the Colon Cancer Prevention Project and is board president. He's also an assistant professor at UL in gastroenterology. He's a native of Louisville and a graduate of Wagner High School.

Dr. Jones graduated with honors in psychology from the University of Louisville in 1983. Afterwards he attended the University of Louisville School of Medicine until 1987. And he's a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society. He served his internship and residency, excuse me, at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Dallas in internal medicine. Dr Jones was appointed chief administrative medical resident and a clinical instructor on the faculty of Internal Medicine in 1990. During his chief residency he was a visiting instructor at the Harvard Medical School's Brigham and Women's Hospital as well as the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Continuing in Dallas for his formal training in digestive diseases until 1993. This included a visiting scholarship in therapeutic endoscopy at Nicci Di, did I get it right, University in Tokyo Japan.

He was named the Wilson Cook Fellow in advanced therapeutic endoscopy at the University of Toronto's Wellesley Hospital in 1993 and completed his post, excuse me, post doctoral training in 1994. He returned to Louisville in 1994 as an assistant professor at the Uni-

versity of Louisville. Then he was appointed the director of therapeutic endoscopy and endoscopy oncology. In 2000 he formed a Midwest Gastroenterology Associates and was promoted to an associate clinical professor at the University of Louisville where he remains an active in education research and patient care. In 2004 he founded the Colon Cancer Prevention Project and he belongs to numerous local and national professional societies including the Kentucky Medical Association, American College of Gastroenterology, American Gastroenterology Association and the American Society for Gastro-intestinal Endoscopy.

His personal interests include tennis, golf, mountain biking, gardening, if he didn't have anytime for anything else, farming and cooking. In fact he is co-owner of the North End Café, which I've eaten at many times, and the new Sweetpeas Southern Cooking on Frankfort Avenue. And finally his most important accomplishment is he is the father of two great kids named Keaton and Nicholas. With that it is quite a pleasure to welcome Dr. Jones to our show. We're going to go a little bit off of the our traditional questions and I'm going to turn the floor over to Dr Jones and let him explain what the Colon Cancer Prevention Project is all about. Floor is yours Dr.

Dr. Jones: Thanks first of all for having us here.

Kirt Jacobs: Sure

Dr. Jones: Give us is the forum

Kirt Jacobs: Absolutely.

Dr. Jones: We've worked together on city business on several occasions here. Records of opportunity here in Louisville and really appreciate all the help that we've gotten.

Kirt Jacobs: Absolutely. Thank you.

Dr. Jones: The Colon Cancer Prevention Project was founded about two years ago. It's a nonprofit organization whose mission is to im-

prove the quality of life in our community by reducing unnecessary suffering and premature deaths from colon cancer. We are a 501C3 organization who works through our pillars of work to change colon cancer in our society. What most people don't realize that colon cancer is the number two cancer killer in America.

Kirt Jacobs: OK.

Dr. Jones: It kills more people every year than breast cancer and AIDS combined.

Kirt Jacobs: Really

Dr. Jones: And we have probably the most universally accepted screening strategy through colonoscopy other forms of screening to reduce mortality. Yet only four out of 10 people in our state are unfortunately being screened. And our our goal and mission is to increase the number of initial screenings which we know based on the scientific evidence is going to reduce deaths because when you detect cancer early while it's asymptomatic you beat it almost every time. It's only when it becomes symptomatic -- you were sent to the hospital with bleeding or abdominal pain or other issues that it becomes a big issue and we're spending a lot of money on it. Unfortunately it's on chemotherapy and radiation and advanced surgery when really this disease can be taken care of through the removal of polyps and early detection. So it's quite an opportunity to make a difference and again we've got all the tools in place. It's just a matter of increasing awareness to folks to do this.

Kirt Jacobs: I'm going to go a little bit more in-depth into that. For men what age should they start being checked for this? And the same for women.

Dr. Jones: Well most important thing you need to realize is if there are family histories of certain diseases. Number one the average risk doesn't apply. So if you've got a family history of colon polyps or colon cancer or if you've got a family history of early ovarian or endometrial cancer not cervical cancer but those others then you need to talk to your doctor because you may well need to be screened

in your 20s or 30s or 40s. But overall somewhere between 45-50. And they have lowered the age for African-Americans. Forty-five for African-Americans, 50 for all of those who are what we call normal risk. That's the time when you should begin screening. And there variety of screening options. Colonoscopy is most preferable at this time because you can actually remove the polyps that form cancer as well as detecting. It's a very accurate test but not everyone chooses that and there are other options and our goal isn't to promote a single type but to make sure that everyone's talking about it and getting some form of screening test.

Kirt Jacobs: So depending on the sex 50 is kind of the...

Dr. Jones: Sex doesn't matter. Race doesn't matter. Age does matter. Family history does matter.

Kirt Jacobs: OK. With that we're going to go back to our regular questioning and kind of kick off the show if you will. What drives you to do this? I mean this is... I consider you somewhat of a pioneer in what you're doing. You're very outspoken about it. Almost every chance I get to run into you I hear about it. I participated in the walk recently I was more than happy to do that. What drives you? In general doesn't have to be the Colon Cancer Prevention Program.

Dr. Jones: You know that the general thing that drives me is time.

Kirt Jacobs: OK

Dr. Jones: You know I see time pass ways that other people I don't think see it because of my involvement with cancer and medicine you know. I see folks who one day have the world ahead of them the next day the times clicking. And I know that everybody's got that including myself. I know it's coming in the future.

Kirt Jacobs: We all do.

Dr. Jones: But I don't know when so I try to use that as my motivating factor to to get on the things I think that are important and

move forward. My motivation for the project really had to do with the fact that you know we didn't have local advocacy. The examples of what they've done with breast cancer and HIV and prostate cancer in terms of raising the level of public awareness, pushing research, pushing activity, pushing behavioral changes that you know no one thought they could do. Within a decade they've made a huge difference. And you know there have been people working on colon cancer understand the biology of it, developing testing for it. You know we're really at this last stage where it's about getting people to understand how easy it is to beat this. And because of that and I'm a gastrologist I have to to walk out probably two or three times a month tell someone who's 60-years-old that it's not going to be OK. And yet I know that if they had see me 10 years ago they would have been OK. And so that prompted me to begin to develop a program to not only push public advocacy which I think is a very important component but also to encourage physician behavior changes. To have them develop systems within their offices to routinely and regularly ask these questions refer people. We've also tried to work with facilities. K.J. in our group are working together to begin to ask these questions routinely of people when they're admitted to the hospital for other things such as pneumonia or a heart catheterization. Because this is the number two cancer killer. Three thousand Kentuckians will get this disease this year and a 1000 will die from it. And if we had universal screening applied to the same levels as other ones and we would cut that down to probably 100-200 people.

Kirt Jacobs: And of those 3000 how many of those even though they have it is that diagnosed or..

Dr. Jones: Well unfortunately in Kentucky 2 out of 3 diagnoses for colon cancer come once people are symptomatic.

Kirt Jacobs: OK

Dr. Jones: Unfortunately once you're symptomatic your chances for early disease are much much lower. So the time to get checked for colon cancer is when you're asymptomatic. You don't change your oil in your car when the engine's blown. That's not the time. This

is a preventative method. And we're really got the best screening methods for years now with colonoscopy and sedation and you know people usually will you know undergo these tests they wake up and they say are we done are we going to start. What are we doing here? Are we ready and they're in fact done. So we've just got better technology than ever. You know what we need are people to come in and get that first screening test. Talk to their doctor. Their doctors isn't speaking with them then they need to ask their doctor. So that's really what's pushing that and then the fourth thing that we're really working on that's a harder thing to get our hands around is access. How do we provide access for the under insured people of Kentucky? How do we provide access for people who are under insured if you will with catastrophic policies? How do we make sure that people are able to access this most important screening test? And again it's all changing so but we don't think you should hear about this disease. once a month, once a year. We think you should hear about this every month. You ought to talk to your mother, your father, your brothers, your sisters because that's who it affects.

Kirt Jacobs: OK

Dr. Jones: And and that's what the project's about. My grandmother died from colon cancer at 84. She lived a full life.

Kirt Jacobs: All right

Dr. Jones: She was you know but she didn't have to. We didn't understand colon cancer in 19 the early 1980s. We didn't realize the importance of screening and family history. Now we do and I think it's very important as a gastroenterologist this is the number one killer in my specialty for someone to step up and make a big deal of this.

Kirt Jacobs: Again I'm going a little off this is going to be a little bit of a different type of interview for our show. Is the Katie Couric and her husband... Did that is that help elevate the awareness?

Dr. Jones: Well absolutely absolutely. I mean what Katie Couric did

was take to a personal forum leadership on on a health agenda. Obviously her husband died early of colon cancer.

Kirt Jacobs: We was in his early 40s wasn't he?

Dr. Jones: You know about about 10% of colon cancers occur before these screening time. So it's very important if you have symptoms or again a family history that you talk to your doctor about that but there is actually a current effect that's described in our literature about the number of people who were referred for a colonoscopy when she came out. So she's clearly one of the first you know put your money where your mouth is leaders in terms of the media and she has an entertainment foundation that continues to partner with a variety of national groups in promoting awareness and information about colon cancer and pushing people toward screening so her work's been amazing. But...

Kirt Jacobs: Great.

Dr. Jones: We've got to do local things. We got to understand our local problems because Paducah knows its problems better than I know Paducah's problems. So we're encouraging people to step up in leadership positions around the state so that they can subsequently develop these these messages in a more effective local fashion.

Kirt Jacobs: Now we're going to gear back down to the more smaller scale focus which is you. What or whom do you credit most influential in your life? Can be more than one person.

Dr. Jones: My parents obviously from a life standpoint. My father taught me about enjoying life and about living in the moment and how important that was. And my mom is probably one of the wisest people I know. She's sought out by many people all over the country for her opinions and wisdom on things because she just got an amazing view of of the world and she's able to digest and bring out the you know sort of the crystal moment of what the question is and it's not always an answer that you like or one that you necessarily want to hear but over time you learn to listen as

you do when you get older. From a professional standpoint my my greatest influence was a gentleman named Daniel Foster who was the chairman of internal medicine at UT Southwestern and he taught me about the need for lifelong learning and it never stops. And he was focused on the medical education and quite honestly I'm an educator. That's what I do. May not always be in the classroom but I'm an educator and his lessons about lifelong learning, about compassion, about forgiveness and here's a fellow who was you know a member of the National Academy of Science. One the highest honors ever to take his time to help people with their day-to-day problems to step down and he truly truly changed my life.

Kirt Jacobs: What was the most defining moment of your life? Can be more than one.

Dr. Jones: Well...

Kirt Jacobs: Personal or professional.

Dr. Jones: You know I thought I was pretty smart guy and I knew most things about things until I had my my first son. And the only description I can give you is that I you know I thought I was the biggest dog on the block and I finally had gotten a hold of the Empire State Building but then what was I going to do? And the answer was you got to go with the flow. You have to go. So I mean becoming a father like I was a father of late at 42. So I have a lot of living a lot of experiences in this you know I think I cried every day for the first three months when I would see him because I was just so amazed that you know here it was. You know really taught me and sort of re-taught me about about love and what that means. So that was that was a defining day. I mean there is no professional moment that comes close to when you have your son and I felt that way about my second son.

Kirt Jacobs: That's awesome. If there is one what is your biggest professional regret? I mean if you could be personal as well again. If you armchair quarterback your life. Looking back over it. You're definitely not done. You've got several chapters hopefully left in you.

Dr. Jones: You know I you know I have everyone has regrets. I don't really have too many big ones because I've always tried to act upon what I like. I think the thing if I could if I had a regret it was that I was not a better writer. I'm always a little nervous about my writing skills, grammar. I think I rebelled in high school because my aunt was my my English teacher and I never really enjoyed it. So writing always it was I'm not writing phobic but it just I think I could have been a lot more communicative in my early academic years but with that said I you know the past is in the rearview mirror. It's a small part of what you look at when you're driving down the road and I try to keep that in perspective. So I try to trudge through my writing sit down and and put things together. But that's really my only regret that maybe I would have had better writing a communication skills. Maybe not verbal skills but writing skills particularly.

Kirt Jacobs: On the flipside of that what's your biggest professional triumph? If you can name one.

Dr. Jones: Well you know hopefully I haven't had it yet and I hope I'm hopeful that the Colon Cancer Prevention Project over time his going to become my greatest professional accomplished. I really feel that we have in Kentucky the personnel, the committed nurses, physicians, family members, the affected folks to really change the course of this. Not in an academic timeline of 10 years or 15 years or 20 years but in a much shorter time frame because I think we've got... We're sort of a tipping point if you will to use a sort of a timely euphemism. We're ready and you know I think the project can help change that from the ground up and then also develop leadership throughout the state to step up. Because we're spending this money on it. It's not like we're not spending money. We're just spending it.... We're sending it to Genentech and companies that do chemotherapy. We're spending it on advanced surgical equipment. That's not the proper place to be putting resources in a state like Kentucky.

Kirt Jacobs: What do you find exciting about all this? I want to interject here I mean I've known you. We've done some work

through the city. You have a very charismatic engaging personality and with all due respect your colleagues with what you do I have a feeling that's not the norm of the personalities that you deal with in your professional life. You bring an excitement to something that frankly is not exciting. And I think that is very magnetic..

Dr. Jones: You haven't had your colonoscopy yet.

Kirt Jacobs: Well..

Dr. Jones: (inaudible)

Kirt Jacobs: Well just give me some nice music Dr Jones.

(laughter)

Kirt Jacobs: One that note what do you find exciting about this or in general?

Dr. Jones: I think by being in the United States at this time that you've just sort of gotten the brass ring chance of life. I really do. And I think that you know I have long ago believe it or not even though this is a television show I've sort of gotten away from classic media and television to try to find and focus on what's important to me and I spend my time on those. And a lot of people say I have too many things going on. That wouldn't be an uncommon criticism.

Kirt Jacobs: We are going to get to that here in a minute.

Dr. Jones: But I think that you know if I'm not excited about it you know I probably won't wouldn't be involved in it. I mean the things that I do I really love and again from my my professional life as a physician, to the project, of the development issues in restaurant is fun, I love it. But I mean you know watching a sitcom is that's not my life. My life's here.

Kirt Jacobs: Right.

Dr. Jones: I'm living my sitcom

Kirt Jacobs: Right.

Dr. Jones: You know if I want to if I want to do it I don't find it on television. I do like to read. I channel surf of from time-to-time but that's not real. The family's real. The business is real. The patients I take care of on a day-to-day.

Kirt Jacobs: Just amazing the amount on your plate. That's what I observe about you. You do have a great personality.

Dr. Jones: You know but the but you know it's OK to have a lot of things and be focusing on. It's also great to be focused on one thing. So I think there's a lot of different styles and I think everybody develops their own over time.

Kirt Jacobs: Can you define leadership in one word?

Dr. Jones: I thought about that...

Kirt Jacobs: It can be more than one.

Dr. Jones: ...as i got the question. Right. I think leadership goes back to team and teamwork. And because if you don't have a team who are you leading? You know if you're out and you remember the Animal House thing which says OK come on let's go.

Kirt Jacobs: Right. Let's go right.

Dr. Jones: Nobody came.

Kirt Jacobs: Nobody came.

Dr. Jones: I think I think team is the most important thing. So I think when you're doing any of these you know whether you're endoscopy or work in a restaurant or whether you're trying to change the course of the disease in a state that's blighted many many cases like Kentucky.

Kirt Jacobs: Right

Dr. Jones: You have to be able to communicate and develop a team and you've got to sometimes lead and sometimes listen and follow because no one has every skill set when it comes to leadership issues. But I think a good leader picks well. I think a good leader tries to motivate folks. And I think that a good leader knows when to step aside and let someone who's better at it takeover. And you know so I don't know that there's one word but I kept going back to was not just execution because you can execute even if you can't lead. And again you can't lead unless you have a team. So I think I think being able to work within a team framework.

Kirt Jacobs: Team player maybe.

Dr. Jones: Well motivate the team. Lead the team..

Kirt Jacobs: Motivation. Execution.

Dr. Jones: From vision to execution because you can get caught up in a lot of different ways but with what you've got to be able to. And again you can't do every phase of every project all the time. You've got to have people you work with and knowing that and that skill of when the step aside or when to elevate someone is important. And I think that's you know my concept is I work in a team concept in almost every one of my areas that I work in. Angela Champion who works with us at the Colon Cancer Project indispensable indispensable.

Kirt Jacobs: She was quite helpful in helping put this show together.

Dr. Jones: So you know that it's not a you know you can't lead without a team. In being part of a team those also know when to follow.

Kirt Jacobs: Very very good point of knowing when to follow. If you could change one thing Dr Jones be it in your life or in general

what would that be?

Dr. Jones: You know I don't think I'd change anything in my life. I'm blessed. I wouldn't I wouldn't change a thing. You know I think the the main thing right now that I'm I'm really focused on and I haven't made a big push because I'm sort of limited their limit on the number of new projects. But I you know the lack of universal health care coverage right now is really part of what I would love to change because it is just a shame with all we know about prevention and early detection services that a segment of our population doesn't access these. You know I'm concerned because of the rising cost of healthcare but not always seeing the effects of it in terms of you know patient outcomes. I think it's a major struggle that we have to come up with. And I like the actually the Massachusetts proposal where you know state government rather than you know subsidizing and spending all this money to subsidize indigent health in fact came up with a plan for the state to buy health care for everybody. And you know some type of private public partnership but I would really love to see some movement forward with regard to that because you may think your health care is expensive but 30 percent of that is because you're paying for someone who didn't have insurance who got treated last week..

Kirt Jacobs: OK

Dr. Jones: Again when a person could who doesn't have insurance for instance with colon cancer comes in with advanced disease. Well you know you're paying \$250,000 dollars to take care of that person because it's chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, end of life care. You know when for the you know maybe 20 percent of that you could have prevented that problem. So I think universal coverage if I could change one thing for health care because that is my business I would change that because I think that's a major major lacking issue with our quality of life here in America.

Kirt Jacobs: Could you describe in detail a particular incident or scenario professionally or personally where you've taken your leadership style and philosophy and taken it from A to Z. or A to B?

Dr. Jones: You know I've never really said that and sort of developed and thought about my leadership style but I will give you a couple of examples.

Kirt Jacobs: Sure

Dr. Jones: One was great and the other was great that it was really horrible. When I was with the University I was the director for clinical affairs and I was sort of the business manager for a multi-specialty group at that time. And we had had a lot of hard times with our cashflow and some other issues and again that's great now but I was actually in the middle of getting my equivalent of an MBA down in a little city outside of Nashville and a seminar was being put on. And I was down there like three days a week and I everyday I was on the phone and things weren't going right and we were having a lot of problems and I said you know where I need to be right now. You know I'm not going to learn anything sitting in this seminar that's going to help my company get out of their problem right now. And never in my life have I ever quit school. But I quit school and I said I have to go back. And I went back and I spent the next month working hard to try to resolve those problems. And I don't know if that's an example of but certainly I knew that I wasn't going to find the answer in the book. I was only going to find it through working hard and sitting down at the table with the people who were involved with us and getting the problem solved. You know step by step by step. So that's that's one example. I think the other one was you know with the project we were working around the state. The Paducah, Glasgow, Somerset and we really hadn't come into Louisville and worked hard on developing local issues because I thought it would be contentious because there is a contentious healthcare network here. There's competition in the state.

Kirt Jacobs: Right

Dr. Jones: Out in the state there's not that. And at one point I had to come back in and you know talk to all my colleagues who had a lot of concerns and say you know it sort of open up the books and fall on the sword and say I'm sorry we sort of got ahead of things

that we wanted to blow this up and move it across the state rapidly. You know what can we do now? How can we make it better? How can we improve things from from the standpoint of your accepting the project? And we were successful in that every gastrologist and surgeon in the city of Louisville, Metro Louisville is on board with the project I'm pushing for.

Kirt Jacobs: That's awesome. I want to throw this one out to you and you can give a fairly quick answer. We're running short on time. And this is a great question for someone like you cause you're multitasking like some of our guests I've never seen. If you were granted two weeks right today. Put the pager away. The cell phone. No access to the Internet. Whomever it was said here's two weeks go what you want. Come back in two weeks. How would you spend those two weeks?

Dr. Jones: I'd spend them with my family and I think right now I would go any place that was warm with the beach that I could get some good seafood and relax.

Kirt Jacobs: Nice.

Dr. Jones: I don't have any place that I would actually you know just sort of dying to go. We're looking we were at the French Open this year which is my mom's Grand Slam tennis fantasy. And we're planning some trips to the Antarctic in 2008. So we're trying to get around and see things. But right now a warm beach. You know quiet would be great.

Kirt Jacobs: Nice

Dr. Jones: Wouldn't have a specific place.

Kirt Jacobs: I gotcha. Now this question we ask all our guests. It's a little bit dark. When the great day comes Dr Jones how do you want to be remembered? If it all in the day you walk out of here and something God forbid tragic happened. How would you like to be remembered? I mean number one it goes back to my family. I want to be remembered as a good father. Not necessarily someone who was always my kids' best friend but someone who prepare them...

Kirt Jacobs: Right.

Dr. Jones: ...for what they were going to face when they when they grew older. And again I think you know this world is changing so much..

Kirt Jacobs: It is.

Dr. Jones: And you know I'm not even sure what I'm going to be doing in 10 years.

Kirt Jacobs: The pace is...

Dr. Jones: Learning to learn and learning new skill sets is part of this new economy in the world and I want to really make sure my children do. And I'd also like to be learned as a remembered as an educator. That in fact you know I did spend my resources teaching trying to improve health trying to change behavior because I think that that's what physicians do. Physicians are in fact teachers and and that's what I do.

Kirt Jacobs: Dr Jones it's quite a pleasure having you on Leadership Landscape. We really do appreciate it

Dr. Jones: Thank you Kirt.

Kirt Jacobs: Thank you sir.

(music)

Kirt Jacobs: Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at kirt@moxietalk.com or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at www.moxietalk.com