

EIR SPEAKER SERIES

# WRITING OUR STORIES WITH AN OPEN MIND

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Spartan Innovations EIR

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**THE BRIDGE** (4th Floor)  
Doug Meijer Medical Innovation Building  
109 Michigan Street SW, **Grand Rapids**



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Hi Everyone! How are we? Thanks so much for coming to my TED talk. I really appreciate it. Everything I say from here forward is Bonnie Dawdy's fault. She's the one who invited me to speak! Thank you for the invitation, Bonnie. I'm Sarah Carpenter and I'm a writer.

I've been thinking and overthinking and overthinking some more about what I wanted to say. But it's really very simple. Let's talk about US!

We are eSports, coin grading, NO2 sensors, interactive retail, mobile pet care, Chilean CrossFit, temporary housing, concierge clinical services, a local food marketplace, oxygen therapy devices, indie music platforms, municipal data managers, collaborative AI, and the list goes on...

I remember 8 months ago when I first met with Kyle and Janet, and we talked about this work and our team... I thought, How am I going to be able to write about all of this stuff? It's all so different and so new to me...

I decided to step back in time a little bit and remembered one of the many kernels of wisdom my mom has shared with me through the years.. to keep an open mind... stay open to the possibilities, learn, seek the silver lining..it's really helped me when I'm writing our executive summaries, press releases and feature stories..I am writing and creating our stories with an open mind. And an open heart. And I hope my words help all of us succeed.

My mom has always helped me with her words, and ever since I left her womb, I've been a little creator. A creator of experiences, of stories, of outcomes of all kinds. I am a true Spartan, and graduated 23 years ago, in August. I remember walking across the stage and wondering what happened for the past 4 years. I was a journalism major and a Spanish minor and I learned how to write and report and edit and talk to people and LISTEN TO PEOPLE. I put heart into my work. I care what people are feeling. I thought I was destined for New York City and broadcast news;

I'd done a local internship at Channel 8 and watched reporters put makeup on in the van before standing out in the wind, waiting for their close-up. It didn't happen. I went to NYC and was honestly, overwhelmed, PLUS, I didn't get the internship at Dateline NBC. My amazing Aunt Barb, also a Spartan, flew me there, and we walked to the world trade center and ate at the top. The Irish bartender served me a beer! I was very excited.

I didn't give up. My mind stayed open. It was Back to the drawing board with the internship search. I'd heard of a Spartan who was out in Hollywood doing Hollywood things. He was a writer and he'd sold a script for \$375,000. I was like WOAHH. I simply had to get in touch with him. I knocked on all the professor's doors in the Comm Arts building. One of them knew Mr. Hollywood. I went out there to visit him and he helped me get an internship at Warner Brothers film. I'm pretty sure he just wanted a date, but I was focused. That internship was for the movie X MEN. I actually finished my college degree with those credits.

Then I met another cool guy, named Bart Simpson. ANOTHER SPARTAN who knew HIM, found me, and at first, I was her nanny. Then I went to work on the show Futurama, and when it got canceled, I got promoted to Springfield. The clouds parted, my skin yellowed, and the world got brighter. I was a production assistant, a coordinator, and a supervisor. Sarah Simpson wore a lot of hats, working with WRITERS, PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS and ARTISTS!!!! I listened, I learned, I won Emmy awards. It was amazing. The only job that ever made me cry, the job that made me better, stronger, a job with friends, a job with love. I took it for granted, I was 23.

I feel it's important to share my life with you now in return for what SO MANY OF YOU have shared with me over the past 8 months as YOUR writer. Executive summaries, press releases, feature stories and whatever else needs making up, I'm here for it. Returning to my writing roots after a long journey of trying other things has been a homecoming.

After Hollywood, I moved to Nashville, TN and worked with Taylor Swift (and others) on Music Row. I had a lot of fun as a marketing/PR person, helping stars find their shine. At one point, I decided to pivot – a friend who'd become a director at Vanderbilt University asked me to join her team as a storyteller. She said it probably wouldn't be as fun as music row but that they needed some help, so I went. I was a marketing/pr person for teams of project managers and executives and wound up running communications for a nationwide research study on Autism Spectrum Disorder. I was on the news, I collaborated with the U.S. Armed Forces, state governmental agencies, advocacy groups, academic institutions, and community organizations. In two years, I recruited over 6,000 people to the project and used my writing and communication skills to land my organization \$500K. After Vanderbilt, I moved back to Michigan, and was the sole copywriter for an ad agency before pivoting once again to healthcare, helping Grand Rapids' community response to COVID-19 as a crisis communicator in the system command center. Following the pandemic, I became a writer and research assistant with MSU's college of human medicine, helping to promote a big study on addiction medicine and instructional design. It was then that I decided I just wanted to WRITE. I started my own business, Sarah Says, and have JUST BEEN WRITING ever since. My first clients were ad

agencies, and I wrote websites...but my portfolio started to grow!! I was so happy to hear from Kyle and Janet that fateful day in November.

And I'm so grateful I can focus on the super hard job of writing and not complicate it with lots of other tasks.

Now I've written for mom and pops, international corporations, and everyone in between. I'm writing and creating our stories with an open mind. And an open heart. I want my words to help all of us succeed. That's what I was hired to do but that's also what I HOPE HAPPENS. There's strategy, there's buckets we're filling, and targets were hitting but ultimately, it's love. We're ALL diving into big risks. We're writing our stories with open minds every day. It's HARD, it's FUN, it's the GAMUT. But I hope you know that good things happen when you keep your mind open, and I'm here to help you.

Thank you.