**Transcript for Mike**

**Keren Coney:** So what I’m going to do is pass over to Mike Kerr now Mike and has a really interesting career history he is actually an ex-student from Liverpool John Moores which was just fantastic and just to see so welcome and how you have experienced of a range of different ways of being employed and now you have your own business and so I am going to pass over to you if that is all right Mike to tell your story.

**Mike Kerr:** yeah, hi good afternoon, so yeah as Keren said introductions, my name is Mike Kerr and I’m the director of two businesses a street food business called Piadina Pronto and also a partner and director of pain Craig bakery which is trading as born to bake Wirral. I’ll try and keep this as succinct as possible as I don’t want you all slipping into a coma So here we go Keren carrying very kindly gave me some structure for my talk. So I’ve actually typed some notes on which I’ll probably end up reading because I’m a little bit nervous because it's the first time I’ve had to do this sort of thing and So here we go, then, so I hope you're all sitting comfortable.

Mike Kerr: My first career of 17 years was as a freelance computer operations analyst but due to personal circumstances, many years ago, I decided upon a change of career and undertook my teaching degree at John Moores University. It became aparent, I had the learning difficulty in that I process words slowly. So I received support with my academic writing, which enabled me to fulfil my degree and I’m proud to say that I came away with the 2:1 honours degree so.

**Q: how did I know what I wanted to do after university.**

Mike Kerr: Well, following my graduation at John Mores I took a permanent post a Helsby High school for several years and I have since taught across all key stages and special needs for the past 18 years in particular I enjoyed working with young people with special educational needs, probably because I could relate to them.

From a very young age, I knew I had entrepreneurial skills and I was always seeing business opportunities, but obviously as a child, you don't have nobody takes you notice of view, you don't have any money so but yeah I did have lots of ideas, but as a teacher, with all the school holidays, that I was fortunate enough to have obviously, it enabled me to travel, which is something that I really enjoy doing and I frequented Italy on a few occasions and fell in love with both the culture, the people, wine and most definitely the food, and it was when I was in Milan, a few years ago that I discovered this thing called a Piadina Pronto and I thought wow I've got to do this at home and that's that was how it all started.

So back in 2017 I made the difficult decision to return to John Moores and undertake a master's degree in special needs and it was at this point, I was referred for assessments and eventually received my diagnosis of autism at the grand age of 52. I have Asperger's dyslexia and slow cognition in that I process words, slowly but it doesn't define or change, who I am.

At the same time I started up my Italian street food business, as I said, Piadina Pronto and the university recommended that I joined the entrepreneur enterprise scheme and with their help, I went on to win the John Moore's Bathgate Start up business of the year 2017 and that was the start of my adventures. I then won another award from Liverpool company called the beautiful ideas company for my work in initiating the woodside village cic on the Wirral I don't know if you know of it, but it's now effectively a street food village, I suggested that in order to rebuild and open up the corridor from the ferry terminal up to Hamilton square that they need the district through village, and that was the solution which now exists.

Year on year, my business continue to grow and be successful I expanded by adding a gazebo setup as well as my trailer. Then a food preparation unit, which also now houses, the trailer when it's not in use. As I was still teaching I established a link with a gentleman called Lee Hollywood the brother of Paul Hollywood from bake off, you all know, who, that is, I hope so, and I worked with them to perfect my dough recipe, so I was it enabled me to carry on teaching but ring up and call my dough off when I needed it and pick it up on my way home.

My business again grew, year on year until covid struck last year which we're all aware of my first event last year, interestingly enough, was the actual Grand National Aintree, so I was absolutely devastated when all of my events all got cancelled for last year.

However, at the same time, back in January last year Lee Hollywood and his business the bakery went on that. Which is another long story and i'll spare you that one, however, as a customer I suggested and again with my entrepreneurial skills, I suggested to the 13 members of staff that lost their jobs, I said why don't we take over the bakery, which ultimately led me going into partnership with the head baker and we set up the new bakery, which opened last October I employ the office manager that worked for them for 16 years and one of the tables hands from the Hollywood business. The bakery is growing, despite lockdown and we are now looking to take on to approach two apprentice bakers.

Many tell me in street food business, which is obviously being on hold, is about to apply for a permanent store within the new Chester market, which is due to open in 2022 next year and i've also now managed to trademark my brand appeared in a Piadina.

You still awake I hope so.

**Q: What would you tell your former self now that you successfully running two businesses.**

Mike Kerr: So what my response to that was what I would say is never doubt yourself and believe in your own ability, you can do anything you set your mind to and everything is possible. She then went on to ask what advice would I give to students listening you guys out there today, and what skills that help you to be successful, what attitude is helpful to adopt so here's my response never give up. If one door closes find a way to go round it never settle for second best and don't ever be afraid of asking if you never asked you'll never get to know. The worst someone can say is no, no big deal learn to be assertive and don't let anybody put you down, we are all difference, and I would highly recommend reading an insightful book called gifts differing it was written by Isabel Briggs and Myers, which I highly recommend is very interesting, even though I don't particularly like reading that much but there you go.

**Q: Any other experiences to share with the students advice on next steps.**

Mike Kerr: So again, what I would say to that my responses, make the most of what the university can offer you their support is fantastic and invaluable.

Your future is at whatever you make it even though we all have different hangups in certain situations, social circles, trying and network sometimes it's not what you know what who you know and then Lastly, I said, always be inquisitive and ask questions.After all, it was being nosy that I discovered Piadina Pronto in the first place in Milan, it was also by being cheeky and asking Lee Hollywood. If he could help me that all of this came to fruition so both my street food business and then eventually my bakery and that's about it and I just got to plug my social media Piadina Pronto and Born to bake Wirral also please sign up have a look that's all i've got to say really are you still with us.

Keren Coney: Thank you so much that was really good Thank you and do you feel free to put those the social media things in the chat if you want to fair, we can, so we can follow them, I was just saying before everyone to write a piece of shame we can't have some samples.