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A Land With No Fences

VETERINARIAN CARES FOR HORSES
IN MONGOL DERBY

Q&A WITH NICOLE WAKLEY

CORPORATE LAWYER TURNED ECO-FRIENDLY ENTREPRENEUR
FOUNDER OF TREE



Q&A



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BY MARGUERITE CLEVELAND | PHOTO BY KRISTINA WUNSCH



Many of us long to ditch our current jobs and follow our dreams but may lack the courage to take such a leap. Nicole Wakley is one of the rare people who took that leap. In 2005, she left her role as a lawyer in the corporate world to follow her dream. What started as a passion for eco-wood furniture has now evolved into TREE, Wakley's one-stop destination for handcrafted, hand-finished furniture, sustainable style and lovingly chosen furnishings and finishing touches that make the heart sing.

PHOTO BY SAM TILLMAN

"MY DREAM WAS TO HELP PEOPLE CREATE HAPPY, HEALTHY HOMES THAT REFLECT THEIR INNER STYLE AND UPLIFT THEIR LIFE."



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Q. TREE is more than just a word for you. Can you describe its importance and why you choose to name your business TREE?

A. "TREE" is so much more than branches and roots—it is a symbol of life and growth, of strength and solidity. I really learned tangibly the meaning of sustainability when I was raising my boys on our sustainable farm in Australia. I really understood the balance of roots and branches and the care required to allow seeds to blossom.

As TREE has branched out into the Pacific Northwest, we have also grown strong roots within our team, with partners, suppliers and all our TREE clients that we meet in-store and in-home. I've also coined the phrase, "TREE feeling," which I describe as that intangible feeling that you feel when you walk into our gallery. So many clients spend their time in the gallery running their hands across the wood grains of our tables and experiencing the uniqueness of the pieces all while whispering, "I just love this!" The "TREE feeling" is that warmth of home that you feel in your heart, and I strive to recreate that with every client and connection TREE makes in the local community.

Q. When you walk into your showroom in Tacoma, you have made this large cavernous space feel warm and cozy. Can you describe your interior design philosophy?

A. I had the dream for our heritage building the moment I saw it. Throughout the renovations, I wanted to honor the history and beauty of the building—the exposed brick, the vaulted ceilings, the large windows and all the industrial aspects of the space. The banana leaves and hanging

chandeliers bring a romantic and natural ambience to the space and draw the eye down to our curated collections in the gallery.

My philosophy for design is to never take it too seriously. I like to play with space and style to create a look and feeling that is unique for the individual client and room.

Q. Why is it important to you to offer a complimentary Home Design Service as part of your business model?

A. When I opened TREE, my dream was to help people create happy, healthy homes that reflect their inner style and uplift their life. We loved consulting with clients in our galleries and helping them choose the perfect pieces for their homes. We introduced our complimentary in-home design services after many requests from our clients. After a few positive client referrals and more interest and inquiries, we launched our design services to the public.

No project is too big or too small! Whether they are starting with a blank canvas and redesigning their home, or they just wish to move a few pieces around to create the perfect balance.

Q. You have traveled all over the world, what about Tacoma appealed to you as a place to put down roots?

A. We loved the Pacific Northwest for its eco-conscious mindset, lifestyle and landscapes, and felt it was the perfect place to open TREE in the U.S. What really brought me to Tacoma was the heritage building I found here in the heart of the

city. I saw my dream of TREE coming to life in this building, and here we are over a year later, growing strong roots in the community.

Q. What makes you South Sound Proud?

A. Our own tagline when we opened TREE in Tacoma was actually, "TREE loves 253!" I have been so amazed and grateful for the support and positivity of this community. We've been welcomed into local communities, networks and homes, and we are here now as part of Tacoma and the Puget Sound.

In its first year, TREE was voted 'Best Place to Buy Furniture' in the South Sound. We were awarded the Tacoma Chamber's Medium Business Spotlight Award for exhibiting ethics and integrity, and we were named 'Product of Choice' for the 2018 NW Idea House this summer. We have had some incredible experiences, and we can't wait for more in 2019.

Q. Giving back to the local community and the world is an important part of your business philosophy. Can you share with our readers some of the ways you give back to the local community?

A. Our commitment to giving back to our community sits at the very heart of TREE. To date, we have globally planted over 77,000 trees, and the number's growing. We are also very proud to partner with Forterra, a local nonprofit, whose mission is to keep the land we love sustainable for the future, ... Compass-360 Association and NW Furniture Bank.