

# **Vermont Arts Council**

## **Transcript**

### **Vermont Made, Episode 5**

#### **“Founding a Feminist Outdoor Apparel Brand with SheFly”**

##### **Desmond Peeples (00:05):**

You're listening to Vermont Made, the podcast for and about Vermont creatives. I'm your host Desmond Peeples, and in this episode I speak with two entrepreneurs who have invented a much needed solution to a very common problem. Charlotte Massey and Georgia Grace Edwards are cofounders of SheFly, an apparel brand on a mission to make sure everyone can answer nature's call outdoors. For more than half the world's population, going number one while outdoors is not so easy as unzipping ones flying, until now. SheFly makes hiking pants with a zipper

that runs between the legs, so that women, non binary folks, trans men, and anyone for whom a front fly just doesn't fly can relieve themselves comfortably.

**Desmond Peeples (00:48):**

Charlotte and Georgia Grace started SheFly in 2018, along with fellow Middlebury College graduate, Bianca Gonzalez, who was unable to join our conversation. Since then, the company has earned the attention of numerous investors, startup competitions and media outlets, including GearJunkie, The Sierra Club, and Forbes. Charlotte and George Grace spoke with me over a video chat about the creativity and business acumen it takes to develop a product from a mere idea to a smashing success.

I'm speaking from Montpelier, Vermont. Charlotte, where are you?

**Charlotte Massey (01:25):**

I am in Leavenworth, Washington at my parent's house where I grew up. I moved back here during the pandemic.

**Desmond Peeples (01:33):**

Okay, okay. And Georgia, how about you?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (01:36):**

I am calling in from Gunnison, Colorado. We did the Moosejaw Outdoor Industry Accelerator out here earlier this summer.

**Desmond Peeples (01:46):**

The what accelerator industry? Can you...?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (01:49):**

Yeah. It's a lot of buzzwords. The Moosejaw Outdoor Industry Accelerator. So it's sponsored by Moosejaw Mountaineering, which is the second largest Outdoor Retailer behind REI in the country. And it was specific to the outdoor industry. So there were four companies who attended. And people applied from three different countries, I think over 130 companies. And the exciting part is that, you secure a purchase order from Moosejaw that will be launching in there, all 10 of their stores, this coming spring.

**Desmond Peeples (02:26):**

Oh, great. That's really exciting. Congratulations. So yeah, this business, in your own words, what is SheFly and your two roles in it? Let's go.

**Charlotte Massey (02:39):**

Yeah, so SheFly is a layerable line of pants designed for women with a patented zipper so that everyone can answer nature's call and relieve themselves outside. And you don't have to pull off your pants and expose skin to the elements or to other people, which is a common occurrence for women when spending time outside. And my main role at SheFly is leading operations and then I also lead our marketing efforts. And we are very much a startup, so right now that involves both designing apparel, working on our supply chain, and then also posting on Instagram and sending out our email newsletters and designing our ad campaigns and everything in between.

**Desmond Peeples (03:24):**

Mmhmm (affirmative). Great and Georgia, what do you do for SheFly?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (03:30):**

I'm also a cofounder of SheFly, and I'm in a CEO role right now. But as Charlotte mentioned, it basically means I do everything. More recently, it's meant a lot of work on fundraising, and weighing in on manufacturing as well.

**Desmond Peeples (03:45):**

Mmhmm (affirmative). Looks like you to have a large team on the website. How many folks do you work with? And what sort of things are they doing?

**Charlotte Massey (03:56):**

We work with about nine people in different capacities. So we've worked with seamstresses and pattern makers and supply chain managers. And then we also have a robust team of interns. We started the company while we were students at

Middlebury College in Vermont. And a lot of our team also went to Middlebury, one of our team members is still at Middlebury. And we really believe in the power of community and that we're stronger together. So we bring in everyone who is excited about helping.

**Desmond Peeples (04:31):**

Great. Great. Georgia the idea for SheFly comes from your lived experience as a hiker, would you say. Is that right?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (04:44):**

Yeah, more specifically a Glacier Guide. Obviously, this is a pain point that has emerged in any type of outdoor activity I've done but it was most apparent while glacier guiding on the Mendenhall in Alaska. So I was spending eight to 12 hours a day upon the ice, usually as one of the few, if not the only

female guide. In comparison to the male guides who could turn around unzip go whenever wherever, I found myself having to trek across the glacier, carefully, avoiding crevasses, completely removing three to four layers. And once I could find a private spot, do my thing, put it all back on, hike back to work, which, as you might imagine, was a huge waste of time, a huge waste of energy, and something that often left me feeling cold for hours after, to the point where I started dehydrating myself. That was my solution at the end of the summer. And I thought, man, there has got to be a better way to do this. And that's kind of where the impetus for SheFly was born.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (05:41):**

And we officially made headway on the idea formally through the Middlebury entrepreneurs

class, which is a J term. It's our one month winter semester class.

**Desmond Peeples (05:57):**

Okay, can you tell me a little bit about what that class was like, I've never been in an entrepreneur's class.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (06:02):**

Yeah, it was great. Especially going to a liberal arts college, I really appreciated the chance to take a class that was so tangible and rooted in something that I could see and hold and build out instead of just thinking about. And Charlotte actually took the class as well, the year before me, she had a art, still has an art business on the side, herself. And I took the class the next year with this SheFly in mind. And the professors for it are Sam and Dave, who run VCET, Vermont Center for Emerging

Technologies. So that's another great collaboration that happens in the Vermont community between local college, ecosystems and neighboring towns. And you go you start the class, it's only four weeks, so it's really fast. You start the class with an idea, and by the end of the four weeks, you've built out your business model, you've done pitch competitions, you have functioning prototypes, hopefully. So it's kind of a crash course in all things entrepreneurship.

**Desmond Peeples (07:03):**

Okay. And so both of you are working remotely right now. But this company, who you work with, everything that happened after this entrepreneurial class is really, really rooted in Vermont. You want to talk about what happened after the class, how you got people, Vermonters involved.

## **Georgia Grace Edwards (07:25):**

So, in college, I took the Middlebury entrepreneurship class, and very quickly another founding member of SheFly, Bianca Gonzalez, stepped in to help get things off the ground following that one month class. And she's the one who actually introduced Charlotte and I to each other, we went to the same college but didn't know each other previously. And then that first summer is when we officially became a Vermont LLC. So we have all of our legal counsel still in Vermont, and lots of help from advisors across the board. And then one year just after, well, actually, less than a year after becoming an LLC, we did a crowdfunding campaign on IFundWomen. And that's when we did pre sales of our pants. We were 367% funded in just over a month, which was really exciting. We pre sold 500 pairs and at that point, we started taking on more people on the team starting out in

the form of internships, many of whom came from Middlebury College, and we've just kind of kept growing since then.

**Charlotte Massey (08:38):**

Yeah, so our first new team members were Ollie and Gabby, and they're still working with us today. And we worked a lot with seamstresses and other mentors in the apparel industry around Vermont. So Georgia Grace graduated the spring after this entrepreneurship class, but I still had a full year left at Middlebury and spent a huge part of my senior year driving around Vermont to seamstresses, houses and showing up at their offices with pants, asking how we could sew in a new zipper or asking how we could make the fabric flaps better and all the different intricacies of the pants that we were trying to figure out. Because it's really tough to sew zippers, we learned pretty

quickly. They're a tricky piece of sewing in the first place and then you're trying to do that in the crotch of a pair of pants.

**Charlotte Massey (09:33):**

So we quickly knew that we needed to bring in some experts. And we are still working with Lisa Berry, who works out of Middlebury and she helps us with usually the first layer of prototyping. So we'll have an idea and we'll come to her and will say is this possible? Can you make a mock up of this? And then we'll refine it and we'll work with other designers on the tech packs and all of the specs that we need to manufacture. But we need those experts sewers to start with the ideation to make sure it's even possible.

**Desmond Peeples (10:08):**

Mmhmm (affirmative) mmhmm (affirmative). So would you say that you two are more designers in the process?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (10:18):**

We've become that.

**Desmond Peeples (10:21):**

Do you have backgrounds in that? Or was this just like this product idea happened and it was just like, okay, we just have to learn everything to make this happen. It wasn't like, "Hi I am a pants expert."

**Charlotte Massey (10:35):**

We definitely are not pants experts or we weren't two years ago. I studied studio art so I had some

design background, but not on the apparel side. And nobody on our founding team was an expert seamstress or anything like that. We just really wanted the product to exist and felt a strong need to make it happen. And have just been pushing to build a team and learn the skills that we need to make sure that the product can exist. But I remember at the beginning, thinking, how in the world are we going to manufacture pants? Like we don't have any factory connections, we don't know how to sew anything.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (11:15):**

So to give you an idea of what those first prototypes like how they came about, I went home for a winter break before that January class started. And I went to a goodwill, and I bought some ski bibs, some snow pants and velcro snaps, any kind of mechanism you can imagine. Keep in

mind, I had not taken a sewing class since seventh grade Home Ec in the Appalachian mountains where I'm from. And so I went to my best friend's house growing up and in her attic, we just sewed a bunch of prototypes that I then took class on that first day. And they were horrendous. So bad, but they were enough to get the point across of what we were trying to do and at least prove the functionality. We had lots of Middlebury friends test them out during that month.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (12:05):**

And almost operated as more of a service at the beginning because everyone was so excited about the idea, they were like, "Can you put these in my cross country ski pants or my hiking pants?" And I was like, "We can, they're not going to look great, but they'll work." And so that's how a lot of the initial idea of validation and testing happened.

**Desmond Peeples (12:25):**

That's really cool. That kind of like on the fly, I guess bootstrapping, is what some people would call it. How...

**Georgia Grace Edwards (12:35):**

No pun intended.

**Desmond Peeples (12:37):**

Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about the steps from that beginning phase to a full fledged business with a product that's like ready to sell. I know you did the peak pitch, it was a local pitch competition, is that correct? Can you tell me a little bit about that experience?

## **Georgia Grace Edwards (13:07):**

Yeah, Peak Pitch and Road Pitch two of our all time favorite pitch events, both backed by FreshTracks Capital in Vermont. And so Peak Pitch, the idea is that an entrepreneur and an investor ride a chairlift together at Stowe. And so instead of an elevator pitch, it's like you're chairlift the tons of the bottom of the mountain to the top. And then if it goes well, you ski down together, and hopefully it results in something. So that was the first event we did that January. And then later that summer, we did Road Pitch, which is another great event where motorcyclists ride around from town to town in Vermont, and local entrepreneurs in each town pitch. And our event was in Barre, Vermont. And it was hilarious to get on stage and look out at a sea of 50 plus huge guys in motorcycle jackets, leather pants. And I looked at Bianca and I said, "Oh man, I don't know if this is our target audience."

**Georgia Grace Edwards (14:14):**

But we ended up winning both the people's Choice and the investor Choice Award at the at that event, which I think was a real testament to just the idea and the demand. And I guess the effort that we put into really solidifying our business model, taking to go back to your question about how you go from those prototypes to where we are now. You take prototypes to seamstresses, then you have something built out that's more solidified. Instead of taking an existing pair of pants, ripping out the crotch seam and putting in a zipper you're now building your own pair of pants head to toe with your own fabric, your own hardware.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (14:57):**

Then you send that to a tech pack designer who basically makes a blueprint for the pants. So it has

all the measurements and dimensions and fabric types. And then that gets sent to a factory, and they produce your first pairs. And our first factory we were producing was a fair trade zero waste factory in India. And that was a recommendation we got from a middle grade professor. So it all goes back to Vermont.

**Desmond Peeples (15:26):**

Cool, yeah. What do you want to talk a little bit about the choice to use fair trade factory or kind of conscious textile industry practices like that?

**Charlotte Massey (15:39):**

Definitely. So from the beginning, we started this company, because we wanted the product to exist, we wanted pants to have this separate design. But we all studied sustainability at Middlebury. And we wanted to make sure we were manufacturing in a

way that would have the smallest amount of negative impact on the world that we possibly could. So we were very excited to find this factory. It was in Dharamshala, India, and I actually went and spent three weeks there, overseeing manufacturing and staying at the system manager's house and getting to know everyone. And it was great because they treated each person as an individual, there were opportunities for people to get feedback to us and to management. And people are paid fairly for their work.

**Charlotte Massey (16:26):**

And they also were very flexible. So they were flexible with us about minimums where we could make one pant in each size. And that's really uncommon, typically, you'd have to make 100, or 200 pairs of each pant in each size and in each color. And that allowed us to start out with the size

range that's much larger than what most brands would be able to do, certainly a lot larger than what we would have been able to do if we were only producing 500 units at any other factory. And we also were able to have multiple inseam lengths. And then it was a zero waste factory, so they took all the excess fabric and turned it into alternative products, and also have fabric recycling processes for any fabrics that are still leftover scraps.

**Charlotte Massey (17:17):**

Unfortunately, that factory ended up going bankrupt and shutting down because of COVID, the area of India that they were in, they went on total lockdown at the start of the pandemic, and they weren't able to get any product out. And we ended up losing all of the inventory that we had there. Mostly it was in the form of fabric and hardware that hadn't been turned into pants yet.

So that was really tough for us, we've got our whole supply chain set up, we had orders that were being made, people who have bought product, and we couldn't get it to them. And so we spent the last year rebuilding our supply chain, and trying to do it in the most ethical way that we could. So we actually had gotten all set up with a factory in Shanghai, and then realized that the certifications that they'd given us were not for the facility where they were actually manufacturing our products. And we decided that we wouldn't move forward with that and started over again, and rebuilt the supply chain for a third time. Because we wanted to make sure that the factories we were using meet our labor standards, that they need our sustainability standards, and that the people making the pants are going to be compensated fairly.

## **Charlotte Massey (18:36):**

It's something that is tough to oversee if you don't have the certifications, and you're not working with factories that you trust. So our new factory is in China too. But it's a factory that lots of large outdoor brands work with who have very strict policies and a lot more capability to enforce their policies because they're placing much bigger orders than us. So it's the factory that Stios worked with and Toad&Co products worked with them. And then we also are very careful about the fabric supplier that we use. So they're one of the top fabric suppliers in the world making really high quality and durable fabric. And we pay attention not just to the sourcing, so trying to source recycled materials whenever possible. And making sure that the supply chain in the fabric mills is ethical as well. But also making sure that we're making a product that's durable so that you can

buy a pair and you can use it for years and it won't just fall apart. So getting as far away from the fast fashion mindset as we possibly can.

**Desmond Peeples (19:44):**

Fast fashion mindset. Can you explain that a little bit?

**Charlotte Massey (19:48):**

Yeah, so there's a push in the apparel industry through big brands like H&M, Forever 21 to make products really quickly, and to make them very cheaply. So you can buy something that is very on trend and of the moment and isn't designed to last much more than that moment. So you might spend only \$10 on a T shirt, but you can only wear it twice, and then it gets thrown away because you can't keep wearing it because it's falling apart. And we don't have a good system set up for what to do

with that clothing. If you donate it to a secondhand shop, most of it ends up not getting resold, a lot of it ends up getting shipped to other countries, and either harming their internal apparel markets or just ending up in landfills and polluting the planet. And it's a huge waste of water in the production process and also fossil fuels with all the transport that's going on, plus just the general textile waste.

**Charlotte Massey (20:54):**

So what we need to do is get away from that and we need to be as much as possible consuming in ways that are sustainable. The most sustainable way to dress is to wear what you already have, and then just replace items as they wear out or get new items that fill a need that you have in the clothing that you're wearing. So for example, if you don't have a pair of pants to pee out of yet, you should can fill that gap. But try not to just...

## **Georgia Grace Edwards (21:23):**

Shameless plug.

## **Charlotte Massey (21:24):**

I know, clearly unbiased. But if you can limit the number of I don't know I have too many black T shirts I probably do not need anymore, so I should stop buying them. That kind of thing is what I'm talking about. And then there's also an issue of access too where, we want people to be able to afford clothing and when you mass produce you can produce it a lot more cheaply. But it comes with a big trade off especially when people end up buying 1000s of dollars worth of clothing which ends up in these huge halls that are posted all over social media. So our brand strategy is to create fewer items that are really quality and fit well and will last and that you'll wear in lots of different

environments. You can wear them hiking but you can also wear them while you're walking around town or you can even wear them to work and I think that's why the apparel industry is heading which is a really good thing.

**Desmond Peeples (22:29):**

You can also wear them when you're motorcycling across the country. I really, I love that idea of the motorcycle Pitch competition. So are the motorcyclists a group of angel investors that just also happen to be bikers?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (22:56):**

Essentially. Yeah, exactly.

**Desmond Peeples (22:59):**

Okay. Okay, cool. Well...

**Georgia Grace Edwards (23:01):**

Vermont. Keep it weird and wonderful.

**Desmond Peeples (23:06):**

Uhuh (affirmative). How has building this business changed you personally? This has kind of been an enormous venture to take on, I'm sure, somewhat of a life's work. How have you changed over the past since starting?

**Charlotte Massey (23:28):**

Great question, big question.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (23:33):**

A better one might be, how haven't we changed?

## **Charlotte Massey (23:37):**

I've learned a lot more about the way that globalization and international systems work. And how important it is to pay attention to how goods are being made and where they're coming from. I've really dramatically changed the way that I shop, so my shopping strategy now is I want to purchase as much as possible just from brands, who I know will do a happy dance because the order came through. So shopping small, shopping from people who are trying to build something that I believe in, and then I want to exist, and moving away from Amazon, and the larger conglomerates as much as possible. Because I understand and empathize with the other brands that I want to support. And then I also after college did a research fellowship called the Thomas J. Watson fellowship. And my research was on gender

dynamics in the mountain guiding industry around the world.

**Charlotte Massey (24:39):**

So I spent, it ended up being just eight months, it was supposed to be 12. Spending time with women in mountain communities around the world, and learned a lot about what it means to be a woman in the mountains, or to at least to not be a man in the mountains. And then also learning about the different applications for our product, because we started it, thinking about the cold and exposing yourself, and also rock climbing, wearing a climbing harness, not wanting to have to remove safety gear. But there's this whole additional market and group of people who have to deal with a lot of shame about exposing themselves at all, and a lot of danger. And we realized that this product is really important, and that is part of what

keeps me going every day. And understanding that we're actually making an impact, we're not just putting more clothes out into the world.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (25:53):**

I would agree with that. Yeah. We were founded on the belief that the problem with answering majors call has nothing to do with our anatomy and everything to do with our clothing. And so that's the mindset that we bring to this product. And I think I've noticed changes in myself, many of which Charlotte mentioned, I think the number one thing for me is that I'm just a much more patient person. Like I fully understand the number of months it takes to go into thinking about something and designing something and communications and wait time from a factory. And I think that's also been reflected in my shopping

habits. I don't expect things to be here in two days, because I know if it's here in two days, you're cutting a corner somewhere, either on the carbon emissions or the cost or the labor.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (26:41):**

And so I try to shop exclusively off of Kickstarter campaigns now. Or crowdfunding campaigns of any type, because I really want to, I know what it takes to bring an idea into a physical product into the world and I want to support people who are also trying to do that. And so I've ordered like, I don't know, in the past two months, I've ordered a few things and I'll be waiting probably a year for those to arrive. But I know it's going to be worth it, because I know the worst that that goes into it. And there are things that I also think should exist in the world. And then I guess more broadly, it's just completely changed the direction of my life

path. I studied international politics and economics at Middlebury and this has been really interesting to see those theories play out in actual tariff costs and politics of moving things across borders with SheFly.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (27:33):**

After I graduated, I did a Fulbright Fellowship in the Czech Republic and I applied to teach at a business academy because I wanted to share what I had learned in college with other high school students in the Czech Republic. And then Charlotte and I have both gone full time with SheFly in the past two months. So our entire career trajectories are now making pee pants which I never thought for myself as a child.

**Desmond Peeples (28:01):**

Mmhmm (affirmative).

**Charlotte Massey (28:04):**

Me either. But I think young Charlotte would be very excited.

**Desmond Peeples (28:12):**

I did love the question you asked Georgia, how have you not changed over the years? Do you have any answers for that?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (28:21):**

Shoot myself in the foot here now. How have I not changed? Well, I think in college, I had no idea what I wanted to do, but I knew that whatever I did, I wanted it to involve a lot of social interaction. I wanted it to afford the opportunity to travel or to at least learn about several other cultures. And then finally to really be able to sleep at night, knowing that what I think I'm doing is

actively making a positive difference in the world. And so I guess those three priorities for me have not changed. At SheFly, we have an incredible team of women and people behind us and that really keeps me feeling motivated. We have traveled all over the place for pitch competitions and meetings, and just seeing which places are other great outdoor hubs to start company and to connect with customers. And then I think we've already touched on this but, no matter how hard it gets, I think we're pretty determined to keep going because I now can't imagine a world where this doesn't exist.

**Charlotte Massey (29:38):**

And how have I not changed? I still love spending time outside and try to get outside to relax and recenter as much as I possibly can. Which shockingly, is more difficult when running an

outdoor apparel brand because, you are always on calls and always busy. So there isn't as much time to go explore, which is counter to what I had hoped for. And then I also would say I'm still very idealistic, I want to push us to do the best that we possibly can and give back in every way that we can. And sometimes that comes into conflict with the realities of running a business. We are running a for profit entity within a capitalist infrastructure. But we can do that in the most ethical way that we can, and make sure that we are supporting as many people as possible through the process.

**Charlotte Massey (30:39):**

And then additionally, and it's been great that a lot of the connections and people who we're working with and early customers and early supporters have stayed consistent as well. So we still get mentorship and support from people from our

Middlebury days, and from the Vermont ecosystem. And that has been a really important form of continuity for us.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (31:11):**

Yeah, I think too, I've always been a super curious person and I don't think that's changed. And I actually think I have more outlets for that now. Just there are so many people we contact and say, "Hey, how did you do this?" We're trying to learn about this. It's kind of like playing the student card but as an adult. So I guess that's another thing that hasn't changed and this perhaps even just increased in nature.

**Desmond Peeples (31:36):**

Mmhmm (affirmative). Perpetually learning as an entrepreneur must, I guess, yeah.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (31:42):**

Exactly.

**Desmond Peeples (31:43):**

Yeah. You know what, we forgot to mention, the time you testified in front of Senator Leahy about intellectual property. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (31:58):**

Yeah, small details. No, that was one of the greatest honors of our company lifetime that's far. That and also, I would say that TEDx talk we gave in Stowe that was another huge highlight for us. But yes, this past May, we testified before the US Senate subcommittee on intellectual property, which is co chaired by Senator Leahy. And the idea was to speak to the entrepreneurs perspective in terms of what barriers exist in obtaining

intellectual property, the way the current process is set up. And we spoke specifically from the Small Business Women's perspective on that process. And so the three things that we talked about as being the biggest hurdles we've had to overcome and obtaining our patents and our trademarks are the lack of capital, the lack of network and the lack of knowledge, which all kind of go hand in hand and are hard for anyone to overcome, but especially for someone just starting out in business or for any type of minority who doesn't see themselves represented in the process.

**Desmond Peeples (33:09):**

Anything about that experience, I want to talk about Charlotte?

## **Charlotte Massey (33:14):**

I can talk more about our TEDx talk, which was an incredible experience as Georgia Grace said. We spoke mostly about the apparel industry, and the importance of redesigning clothes that actually work for women's bodies, and how pants were designed for men and by men, and still, most of women's clothing is designed by men and most large brands are owned by men. So there just hasn't been an opportunity for a full redesign and an opportunity to rethink how apparel should function and should be designed. And we think that's why this design doesn't already exist out in the world, because it is pretty obvious that there's a fly for men to go to the bathroom, there should be one for women. And for everybody who needs this functionality, it's not just for people who identify as women.

**Desmond Peeples (34:11):**

Right, right.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (34:11):**

Number one or number two, SheFly got you.

**Charlotte Massey (34:14):**

Yeah, and the opportunity to get up on stage in front of an audience of people who really believed in us and were supporting ice was incredible. And definitely not just the highlight of working on SheFly, but a life highlight. And we're so grateful that we were able to have the opportunity. And now that people can watch the talk and keep learning about what we're doing. And that will continue, hopefully for years to come.

**Desmond Peeples (34:46):**

Yeah. Great. We'll put a link to the TED talk in the show notes definitely. So, you spent the last year you said rebuilding your supply chain, you've both recently gone full time in the business. What does the future hold? What are you hoping for in the next few years?

**Charlotte Massey (35:11):**

Good question. So we are launching pre sales again, soon, we're going to have inventory from our new factory in spring of 2022. So right in time for hiking season, and we're adding new colors and we expect this pants to sell out pretty fast. So if you want to snag a pair of SheFly pants, definitely check out our website and get on the waitlist, because those people will get first access to pick the size and color that they want. We are going to be launching new products in 2022 and 2023,

which we are very excited about, so stay tuned for those. And we're going to just keep trying to expand to create products that can fit as many people as possible so that everybody can answer nature's call and feel comfortable and confident outside.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (36:08):**

I think Charlotte hit the big things, too, I'm excited about expanding additional revenue streams. So right now and previously, we've only ever operated as a direct to consumer online company. And as Charlotte mentioned, that will soon change in the spring because we'll be in stores as well. And in talking to people who currently have SheFlys, I'm getting really excited about all the other applications that didn't occur to me when I set out. Outdoor recreation was definitely the most obvious use for us for the reasons we've talked about. But

there are a lot of people who work outside whether that's field scientists or farmers or bridge inspectors or anyone who has any kind of safety equipment outside. They have perhaps even a greater need for this product and so I'm excited to see how we can reach larger audiences through uniform sales and through eventually licensing out our technology to other applications.

**Desmond Peeples (37:12):**

Great. Yeah, I mean, this product is obviously a necessary. I'm surprised that it hasn't existed up until now, and I'm so happy to know that it does. Before we wrap up, I wanted to ask you, Charlotte about your art. It's been mentioned a couple times that you're also an artist. Can you explain?

**Charlotte Massey (37:37):**

Sure. So I am a painter. Most of my painting is focused on exploring materials. So I paint a lot with coffee, and also with matcha tea and natural dyes. I had some shows in Vermont while I was in college, mostly focused on the coffee because it's really fun to show coffee art in coffee shops.

**Desmond Peeples (38:06):**

Oh, like that.

**Charlotte Massey (38:08):**

And then my latest collection is focused on soils, so I'm collecting rocks from mostly around the western US. And...

**Georgia Grace Edwards (38:19):**

Yeah, so if Charlotte asked you to go on a road trip, do not say yes, unless you're fully prepared to stop maybe once every 100 yards to pick up some rock she spotted on the side of the road.

**Charlotte Massey (38:31):**

But [crosstalk 00:38:33]. But I'm picking up all these rocks in order to grind them up and process them and turn them into watercolor paint. And then I paint the landscapes that they came from with the rocks that the landscapes are made from.

**Desmond Peeples (38:52):**

Oh, that's very cool.

**Charlotte Massey (38:53):**

Thank you. It's worth it, it's worth the hassle of pulling over on the side of the road.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (38:59):**

Jury's still out on that one, but. No, I'm kidding, they're beautiful. And you can actually see some examples of Charlotte's artwork on our... One of our stickers, for example, is an art scene that she painted in college. So you can find that on our website as well.

**Desmond Peeples (39:13):**

Oh, very cool.

**Charlotte Massey (39:15):**

Yeah, and my art website is charredlatte.com.

Which is C H A R R E D L A T T E, because a lot of

my art is paint with burnt espresso shots that I get from coffee shops.

**Desmond Peeples (39:31):**

Have you ever been to a coffee shop and been like give me all your grounds and then do a like a painting show right there.

**Charlotte Massey (39:39):**

Oh, always. That's the first thing I do whenever I go to a new town, I go to a coffee shop and get some espresso and start painting with it. It's a great way to make friends.

**Desmond Peeples (39:48):**

I bet, I bet.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (39:51):**

I think it's hilarious when the barista puts down this like \$6 beautiful drink. And then Charlotte immediately puts a paintbrush in it like that is my favorite scene to witness.

**Desmond Peeples (40:07):**

Georgia, do you have any creative outlets other than your business.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (40:14):**

Yeah. I actually love making postcards too. My postcards are not as beautiful as Charlotte's in terms of landscapes, but they have their own flair, which any of my penpals can attest to. another thing I really liked doing is jewelry making so, I lived in Salt Lake City for a summer and learned how to wire wrap and then I taught a course at

Middlebury actually on how to do that with local stones. So that's something I like to do.

**Desmond Peeples (40:46):**

Great. Do you sell the jewelry or anything? Or is just your personal shine.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (40:53):**

I've mainly just gifted. I've always thought okay, I should set up an Etsy shop. But then I'm like, wait, I already have one business going, let's stay focused.

**Desmond Peeples (41:04):**

Yeah, who knows what will happen? Well also I was learning if you wanted to share a story from your life as a Glacier Guide. Maybe one of your

favorite memories from that life, I guess, as we started with the negative.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (41:22):**

That's funny. I mean, it was hands down my favorite job I've ever had besides running SheFly, I suppose. Oh, so much fun. I'm trying to think of a specific story. I mean, the process of getting there was a story in and of itself. The reason I even... So let's backup. I'm someone who keeps a bucket list at all times. And glacier guiding was something that was on my bucket list. When I was in middle school, my grandmother took the family on a cruise to Alaska for her 70th birthday and one of the excursions was this glacier walk. So a little seventh grade me was out on the glacier looking around and the helicopters started weaving helicopters, how you arrive at the glacier, and they

couldn't get me back in it because I just kept wandering off.

### **Georgia Grace Edwards (42:14):**

And my mom was like, "Georgia, we have to go come on." And I was like, "Mom, I'm going to work here one day." And she was like, "That's nice honey, like get in helicopter, let's go." But I kept it on my bucket list. And there was a summer in college where I had kind of two free months, and I didn't know what to do with them. So I took out my bucket list and I was like, "Oh, why don't I do this?" So I sent in an application to the company that I had jotted down way back in middle school. And I get a call from one of their recruiters and he says, "Oh, you must be earth science, geology major. This must be important coursework for you." And I was like, "Oh, not quite, but I'm a fast learner." And then he was like, "Oh, but you must

be a University of Alaska student so this is convenient." I was like, "No, I'm on the other side of the country." And then he was like, "Wait, why do you want this job?"

### **Georgia Grace Edwards (43:05):**

And so I explained that whole story and ended up getting the job because there's a lot of cruise ships that come by so there's tourists from all over the world and they didn't have anyone to give tours in Spanish. And I studied Spanish as part of my major, of course, knew no words. I didn't even know the words in English for some of the glacial features but, I eventually learned to them in Spanish. And I showed up in Alaska that summer and asked the company to pick me up from the airport and got back to their office. And they were like, "Who are you?" And I was like, "Oh, like, I'm Georgia Grace, I'm here to be your Glacier Guide."

And they're like, "What? Wait, we don't know why you're here." And it turns out, the person who had hired me, had been fired from the company, however many weeks before, and like didn't pass on the information that he had hired me.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (43:51):**

So now I'm in Alaska, by myself, don't technically have a job. And so I ended up having to work my way up from the safety video instructor who like told people how to put on their glacial boots, to then the person who was in charge of fueling the helicopters, which was another experience and then eventually, I worked my way up to glacier guide. But that whole experience had a lot of unexpected bumps along the way. I learned a lot.

**Desmond Peeples (44:17):**

And it led to all this.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (44:22):**

And it led to here, I know, who knew?

**Desmond Peeples (44:24):**

Yeah. Well, that's about it for us. It's really been a pleasure talking with you, Charlotte and Georgia. Thank you so much for your time.

**Georgia Grace Edwards (44:35):**

Thank you.

**Charlotte Massey (44:36):**

Yeah. Thank you for having us.

**Desmond Peeples (44:38):**

Do you have...

**Georgia Grace Edwards (44:38):**

We love reflecting on our favorite Vermont memories, so thanks for having us relive them.

**Desmond Peeples (44:45):**

Yeah, of course. Do you have anything else you would like to share any last words with the audience?

**Georgia Grace Edwards (44:53):**

I think for me, it's just gratitude. SheFly I would not exist without the state of Vermont and we're really proud to have started in Vermont, and to keep coming back to Vermont. And a large chunk of our customer base is in Vermont, and we see you and we appreciate you and thank you for believing in us from the start when all we had was ugly ski bibs with a bright yellow zipper in the crutches, it means a lot.

**Charlotte Massey (45:21):**

And if anybody's listening to this, because they're thinking about starting their own business, and doesn't know how to get started, definitely reach out to us. We read all of the emails and respond to all the emails that we get and love supporting other people who are trying to do the same thing that we did. Because, we would not have gotten as far as we have without incredible mentors and people who are willing to spend time sharing their expertise. So definitely reach out.

**Desmond Peeples (45:51):**

That's our show. If you're itching for a pair of SheFlys or know someone who might be you can learn more about them in the show notes at [vermontartscouncil.org/podcast](http://vermontartscouncil.org/podcast), or head right to the source at [sheflyapparel.com](http://sheflyapparel.com). Vermont Made is

a production of the Vermont Arts Council, the primary provider of funding, advocacy and info for the arts in Vermont, which is the traditional and unceded territory of the Abenaki people. Thank you for listening.