

**Jennifer Herbert** didn't plan on going into business. She wasn't a businessperson. Not at first, anyway. **She wanted to work with young people who were disconnected and facing challenges in their lives.** So the Baylor Health, Human Performance and Recreation major graduated and went straight into adventure-based therapy with at-risk youth.

**S**he was hired as the full-time summer camps director at Drug Prevention Resources, Inc., an organization she interned with during her senior year. She taught life skills, substance abuse prevention and team building at Christian-based camps across Texas for youth living in public housing. Over time, her position changed. Herbert stepped into the role of Dallas County Programs Director, working with youth in the Dallas Housing Authority, Dallas Independent School District and the Dallas County Juvenile Department on truancy, substance abuse prevention and HIV/AIDS prevention.

"I loved it," she said. "But what I realized was that our youth weren't having the opportunities to share their brilliance and voice. And if there was no one there to help them advocate for themselves, they were often lost in the system. That's when I realized I wanted to have a greater impact."

She knew there was something missing from her training. After observing how kids and parents were treated in the legal system and how the right resources weren't in place to help youth overcome barriers, she decided to further her education by either going to law school or getting an MBA. She chose an MBA.

**"It felt like there was a missing piece, and I felt like an MBA would help me bridge the gap between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors," Herbert said.** "Passion and mission drive nonprofits, but their efforts can be minimized by poor business strategy. Nonprofits need solid business execution—to put strong practices in place to maximize, and be held accountable for, the impact we have on the community."

Shortly after receiving her MBA from Baylor and moving to Boston, in spring 2007, Herbert met with the founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of More Than Words (MTW) Jodi Rosenbaum, and soon after, she joined the MTW team as the chief operating officer (COO).

MTW is a nonprofit, social enterprise that empowers youth ages 16 to 21 who are in foster care, court involved, homeless or out of school to take charge of their lives by taking charge of a business. By working as a team to manage their own retail and online used book businesses, café and community space, youth develop the employment skills, leadership and self-confidence they need to successfully transition to adulthood. MTW believes that when system-involved youth are challenged with authentic and increasing responsibilities in a business setting, and are given

high expectations and a culture of support, they can and will address personal barriers to success, create concrete action plans for their lives, and become contributing members of society.

At the time Herbert started, there were three full-time staff and one location at MTW. In 2014, there were 28 adult staff, 181 youth team members and more than 1,000 individual volunteers supporting the two Massachusetts locations. There is even the first "MTW-Inspired Replication" opening in Northern Ireland in spring 2015.

**"More Than Words blended my passion for helping young people to see their true potential with a business model that provided the perfect vehicle to deliver on that mission," she said. "It has allowed us to create a place where youth know they matter—often for the first time in their lives."**

As COO, Herbert has done everything from running business shifts, picking up book donations, to collecting and analyzing data to fully evaluate MTW's impact and outcomes.

"I consider myself a generalist," she said. "I train and give leadership in all aspects of MTW—from the social enterprises we run to codifying systems for youth engagement to future strategic development."

Beyond her formal duties, Herbert helps teach the youth at MTW less quantifiable skills.

"I've taken the approach of living life with arms wide open," she said. "I ran ten races in 2014. I've taken classes for silver smithing, mandolin, glass blowing, and I'm involved with Inc. seminars to continually grow and challenge myself. It helps me be a better leader within the More Than Words community. Our youth have lacked exposure to opportunities that help them become happy and healthy individuals. I want to pass it on. Keep learning. Choose joy. Let them know you have a choice in how you're going to be, so choose to do you the best you can every day."

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**jennifer** MBA '05  
**HERBERT**

Chief Operating Officer  
More Than Words

**BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**  
[bbr.baylor.edu/jennifer-herbert](http://bbr.baylor.edu/jennifer-herbert)