

Julie Smolyansky

President & CEO, Lifeway Foods

Julie Smolyansky became the youngest female CEO of a publicly held firm when she took over her father's kefir business, in 2002 at the age of 27 after his sudden death. Since being named CEO and director of Lifeway Foods (NASDAQ: LWAY) Julie has continued the company's growth trajectory with creative product development and marketing, bringing an Eastern European product into the U.S. mainstream and boosting annual company revenues to nearly \$90 million by 2012 from \$12 million when she took over. Julie and her family were one of 48 families allowed to settle in Chicago from the Former Soviet Union in 1976 when she was just a one year old. Her mother Ludmila opened the first Russian delicatessen in Chicago's Rogers Park in 1978 and eventually owned 5 locations giving the Smolyansky family its entry into the food industry. Julie has vivid memories of being an early "guinea pig" for the kefir business founded by her parents in 1986 whether sampling new flavors and formulations, or traveling to food shows to help her parents build Lifeway into the first U.S. company taken public by a Russian immigrant.



Julie is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago (B.A., 1996), where she majored in Psychology and minored in Women's Studies. Julie began her career as an in home family counselor for Care Works, an agency that supported Department of Children & Family Services. She left the social service field to support her father at Lifeway Foods in 1997. Julie serves on the board of directors for the Anti--Defamation League, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (a division of Jewish United Fund), Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, Rape Victim Advocates, University of Illinois Alumni Association, International Probiotics Association, and Bia Sport (advisory board member). She is also a member of the United Nations Foundation Global Entrepreneurs Council, Economic Club of Chicago, Young Presidents Organization, The Committee of 200, The Chicago Network and is a Summit Series and Fortune Most Powerful Women community member. She has presented research at the American Psychological Association's Annual Meeting (1996), and is a frequent speaker for various organizations including Nutracon's annual Anti--Aging Nutraceutical Conference, ChicWIT, the Nutrition Biz Journal Conference, the University of Illinois at Chicago Honors College, New Hope Natural Media, GE Leading and Learning Conference, Womenetics, JUF Women's Leadership Division, Women's Funding Network and is frequently asked to participate in panel discussions for organizations on a variety of topics ranging from healthy living to innovation, entrepreneurship, leveraging social media, and increasing women's participation and leadership roles.

Julie recently joined Christy Turlington Burns as a maternal health advocate traveling to Bangladesh with her and Every Mother Counts and participating in a series of screenings and panel discussions for the film 'No Woman No Cry'. Julie frequently travels to the White House, including her 2011 visit to support young entrepreneurs with the non--profit organization Our Time and advocates for Violence Against Women issues in the Vice President's Office. Julie has been featured on multiple media outlets including ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Forbes, Fortune and was named to Crain's Chicago Business '40 under 40'

in 2005, Today's Chicago Woman 'Rising Stars' and was a finalist for Ernst and Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2010, and was the recipient of the Anti-Defamation League 2013 Woman of the Year Award. Fast Company named her one of the "Riskiest in Business" in 2011 and New Hope Natural Media named her as one of top ten natural food executives to follow on Twitter. In 2013 Julie co-founded a non-profit, Test400k, an organization dedicated to advocating ending the backlog of 400,000 untested rape kits in the United States.

Julie lives in Chicago and is the mother of two girls. She is never without crayons, baby wipes or her iPhone. She is also an avid marathoner, Pearl Jam devotee (she has been to 30 shows in multiple states and countries), reader/writer, cupcake connoisseur and frequent user of lavender sea salt body scrub for relaxation. Follow Julie on Twitter at @JulieSmolyansky.