

Memory in the Making

A dream business honors a lost son, and helps a grieving mom heal.



CUTE TO THE MAX: Jayne and son Max, at age 5.

found herself drifting there to grieve. “I spent the first two years just getting through the day,” she recalls. After reading Julia Cameron’s *The Artist’s Way*, a book about unblocking artistic inhibitions, Jayne sensed she needed to reconnect with her creativity to fully heal. She began dabbling with watercolors, and one day, she wandered into a fabric store.

Something clicked. “It was the first time in a long time I had felt joy,” Jayne

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remembers. Almost immediately, she started thinking about making handbags. Years ago she had created “crafty things,” and now she began to again play with color, shapes and texture. At first she gave her bags away as gifts, then began displaying them in art shows. “Once I started, I couldn’t stop.”

Since then, Jayne has turned her hobby into a full-time business. With the help of SCORE, a nonprofit group for entrepreneurs, she created a business plan, and in April 2006 launched Designs by Jayne (designsbyjayne.com). Her

At home in her sunshine-yellow studio in Portland, Oregon, Jayne Dearborn works with a stretch of buttery soft lambskin. Watching her cut, stitch and glue, you’d never guess that this woman with an eye for fashion—and a weakness for ostrich feathers—worked for years in the corporate world, leading executive health and wellness programs. Or that this cheerful space is where Jayne, a mother of three, mourned the loss of her middle son, Max, when he died from leukemia in 2001. He was seven years old.

Jayne’s studio was once Max’s room, now transformed with bright paint and white furniture. When her little boy died, Jayne often



Jayne Dearborn, 49
Portland, Oregon

bags sell for \$80 to \$400 in boutiques around Portland and in Scottsdale, Ariz.

But her dream doesn’t stop there. She and her husband, Chris, plan to develop a nonprofit in Max’s name for research on childhood leukemia. Until then, they donate a percentage of sales to charity. Their other two boys, Michael, 18, and Sam, 11, find ways to lend support—in fact, Michael designed her company logo.

Through all this, Jayne says she feels a strong connection to Max. “To me it’s so much more than handbags,” she says. “It’s about Max. It’s about giving. It’s about hope. You can rebuild your life in a way you never expected.” ●

START-UP SECRETS

Whether you’re considering a total change like Jayne or a smaller move, you need to know the Five Fs, says the Rev. Ojeda Hall-Phillips, former director of the Brooklyn Women’s Business Center and now an ordained Baptist minister. Here’s a quick primer:

• KNOW YOUR FINANCIAL REALITY.

This is no time to live in denial. Be aware of exactly how much is coming in and going out.

• **FULFILL YOUR PURPOSE.** As Jayne learned, sometimes our greatest service

to the world comes out of great pain or challenges. “No one is without a unique purpose,” Ojeda says. “We have to push ourselves to get there.”

• **OVERCOME FEAR WITH FAITH.** Remember: You’re entering new terri-

tory, Ojeda says. “Be courageous, and believe that someone bigger than you is fighting for you.”

• **FIND FAMILY SUPPORT.** Knowing just one or two people are behind you can be enough.

• **FORGIVE YOURSELF—AND HAVE FUN.** Get past the doubts and feel good about your new direction, Ojeda says. “You’ll make mistakes. And that’s OK.”