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Bead business provides benefits for owner and varied charities



Jenny Page finds therapeutic effects from making jewelry.

By Liz Juranek
Carmel Business Leader

By helping others by donating beaded jewelry, Beads for Needs owner Jenny Page has also helped herself.

A bike accident when she was 10 years old ruptured her spleen and left her with a lifetime of health problems, including abdominal lesions, scar tissue, chronic abdominal pain, ovarian cysts and borderline Crohn's disease, Page said.

"I spent the first three years of my diagnosis lying in bed feeling sorry for myself," she said. "Making jewelry is a kind of therapy for me. I can get in a quiet place, get in a creative place. It's kind of like a runner's high. It gets endorphins going and I feel good about it. There's very little that makes me feel physically good. I look at what I have and feel very lucky."

She began creating jewelry while helping her friend Lisa Fox, of Foxy Beads, make bracelets to sell for autism awareness. This introduction to both beading and charitable work spurred her to create Beads for Needs, which she has operated for about a year.

Page frequently donates her jewelry to charities' silent auctions. She found this to be a good solution to donating to charities instead of giving money, because she was approached by so many.

Because she is a direct client of Swarovski crystals in Austria due to family friend connections, she gets the beads at cost.

Therefore, "I'm able to gift these crystals without too much impact on our bottom line," Page said. "I donate jewelry to silent auctions for charity. A \$30 bracelet turns into a \$150 bid. In most instances, 100 percent goes to charity."

She said she encourages other friends to donate items.

"All it takes is one piece," she said. "If you can give one piece and raise \$150 for the American Cancer Society, they could save a member of your family's life one day."

Sometimes she also sells her jewelry at the charity event, with a percentage going back to the charity. She said while she enjoys donating to the silent auctions, it's better for her bottom line to sell at the event and donate an amount to the charity.

"I really do have a lot of charities near and dear

to me on a personal level," she said. "At this point, there isn't anyone I've said no to."

Some of the organizations she has donated to include Project Safety Net, Prevail, Rally for the Cure, Paracletian Pregnancy Crisis Ministry and local schools.

In addition to Swarovski crystals, Page uses semi-precious gemstones. She said she also believes in the therapeutic healing power of stones to an extent, and combines some of this in her jewelry.

Also, because her mother had arthritis, Page uses sterling silver magnet clasps often, which makes jewelry easier to close. And because a lot of her customers don't have pierced ears, she also designs clip-on earrings.

She has created a boutique in her home, and customers come to her to create jewelry accessories to match the rest of their wardrobe, she said.

When she first started Beads for Needs, Page was designing for

her friends.

"People started seeing the designs I made," she said. "They would say, 'How much would something like that cost?' Everything I get at well below cost. I didn't feel comfortable charging my friends, but it got to the point where they referred friends. They said, 'You could charge five times as much and I would still pay for it.'"

She said her demographic varies, from young girls to high school and college-aged women to men buying gifts for their wives. At jewelry shows, she said her customers are usually women from 30 to 60 years old.

An example of the work she does for younger girls includes designing charms to put on a medical identification bracelet.

"I have a girlfriend's daughter who was just diagnosed with diabetes," Page said. "Her mom bought her a medical ID bracelet, a stainless steel tag. I've been making really cute butterflies and flowers to clip onto her medical bracelet. She can change it out to match her outfit the next day. A lot of people tell me I should talk to people at Riley because no one else is doing this."

Page said if her doctor said she had to give up making jewelry, she wouldn't.

"I would love for my passion for giving to be contagious," she said. "If she can do it with everything going on, I can, too."

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