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ENTREPRENEUR

SCRAPBOOKING IS CLOSE TO HER HEART

Pleasant Grove company is multimillion-dollar contributor to the scrapbooking industry



Jeanette Lynton has spent 20 years shaping her scrapbooking and stamping business called "Close to My Heart." She employs 160 at her 100,000-square-foot office.

Jeanette Lynton's bulging scrapbook from her Salt Lake high school predicts where her life would lead. She created her own background paper. Her layouts had consistent elements and designs as the pages move from prom pictures to playbills.

"Scrapbooks are the love of my life," she says. "They are treasure boxes you can look at on a rainy day and see who you were."

When Jeanette looks at her high school days displayed in a red binder, she is reminded of the spunky girl who did everything she wanted to do.

"That book has helped me so many times because I can connect with myself," she says.

Jeanette's true self is a creative, hard-working entrepreneur who has built a one-woman stamp company into Close to My Heart, a multimillion dollar privately held scrapbook

company headquartered in Pleasant Grove.

This mother of four was reared by hard-working entrepreneurial parents. She had a "direct sales mommy," who was always packaging Avon or planning a Tupperware party.

Her parents taught her to love God, to give thanks and to know that she could do anything she put her mind to.

She didn't know immediately where her life would lead. She left BYU after one year to be a wife and mother. Although Jeanette never considered herself an outstanding artist, she knew she had a love for the creative. She remembers the day she saw her first stamp — it was of doodles of flowers.

"It reminded me of the art I would see my friends draw in the 8th grade," she says. "I always thought my girlfriends could do things better than I could, and I wanted to be able

to draw like that."

When she began stamping, she knew she wanted to do this for the rest of her life. Now she helps others find that same creative high she remembers from her first stamp.

"I like to help people put down their creative aspirations on paper and create their own feeling like I had the first time I held that rubber stamp in my hand," she says.

FROM THE BEGINNING

Nearly 20 years ago, Jeanette began selling rubber stamps to friends and family. Although at first she sold other company's stamps, she began asking herself this question (Jeanette believes all good business moves are based on asking good questions) — "Could I make my own stamp designs?"

The only way to find the answer was to draw a few designs and have the stamps made. At her first craft show, she sold \$2,000 worth of her own stamp designs.

"That was big for me," she says. "I realized that people loved my stamps."

Eventually, Jeanette stopped selling other company's stamps and focused on building a client base for her own designs.

In the early days, Jeanette "burned rubber," as she called it, to make her own stamps. She would lay in her laundry room all night to rotate the products every hour.

"One night I fell asleep and woke up to a horrible smell," she says. "Over the years I've done whatever it takes. I don't have any regrets, although I do still remember that burning smell."

In 1989, Jeanette formalized her stamp company and named it DOTS Adventures. Six years later, she began working on a scrapbooking addition to the company. She introduced her first scrapbook products in 1996. She began growing her business through independent distributors who held scrapbooking and stamping parties.

Soon Jeanette began to sense an identity crisis within the company. Were they a stamp company? A scrapbook company? As she

asked herself some important questions — “Who are we?” “What are we?” “What do my employees mean to me?” The answer was loud and clear — Close to My Heart.

She announced the new company name at their national convention in June 2000, and the audience cheered.

CLOSE TO MY HEART AT A GLANCE

Close To My Heart aims to make scrapbooking faster, simpler and easier for the men and women who feed into the \$2.5 billion scrapbook industry. Products include albums, accessories, coordinated papers, stamps and inks with exclusive designs.

The company's proprietary scrapbook and card creation programs teach techniques with step-by-step instructions, templates and other information to help beginners and enthusiasts succeed at making personal pages for their family scrapbooks.

Thousands of Close To My Heart consultants throughout the United States and Canada provide group and one-on-one instruction for customers.

ROLE AS CEO

As CEO of Close To My Heart, Jeanette feels like she is in the best spot of her life.

“I've worn different hats through the years, but today I've learned that to be a successful CEO I have to manage my time well,” Jeanette says. “I rely on putting people in place who are dynamic. I can sleep at night because of every person who is here.”

Jeanette says one key to being a happy CEO is delegation. She meets every morning with her two vice presidents. Together they decide what needs to happen for the day, and they report back the next morning. Jeanette believes in the team model where every person is responsible and accountable.

“Our employees feel ownership for what they do,” she says. “They know they are valued, and we're always looking at ways to benefit employees.”

THE BALANCING ACT

Jeanette faces the balancing act with which most working moms are familiar.

“I made it a point as a mother to be doing something that would allow my children to be with me at all times,” she says.

This meant the kids came to the craft shows, playing under the tables to see how close they could get to touching someone's feet without them noticing. Jeanette ate lunch under the tables with her kids.

“My kids remember those times — those are our roots,” she says.

Jeanette has always made it a priority to have a place for her children at her offices. Now her nursery is turning “tweenish” with homework stations, Love Sacs and TVs.

Adding to the family touch, Jeanette's husband, David, is the production manager of the warehouse where the products are manufactured and distributed. He joined Jeanette in her business ventures in 1994.

“There aren't too many great men out there, but he's one of them,” she says. “This has been a great adventure together.”

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Jeanette's goals for the future are to stay ahead of the game.

“I want to put out the very best and be on the cutting edge,” she says.

If the past predicts the future, she'll continue to set trends. She was the first to bring the 12X12 album to market. She introduced the first background and texture paper for the scrapbooking industry. In 2004, Close to My Heart unveiled a 9X9 scrapbook.

This dynamic woman in this unique but unmarked building in Pleasant Grove is continuing to shape one of the fastest growing industries in the world. ♦

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At A Glance

JEANETTE LYNTON, FOUNDER AND CEO OF CLOSE TO MY HEART

COMPANY PROFILE: Designs and produces stamps, scrapbook supplies and programs

EMPLOYEES: 160

EDUCATION: 1 year at BYU

CHILDREN: Four, ranging from 9 to 23
GRANDCHILDREN: Two — “and they are a joy”

KEYS TO SUCCESS: “Never give up on your dreams. Keep going no matter how hard it is. Just take one step in front of the other.”

TIPS FOR HANDLING PEOPLE:

“People will always remember how they felt around you, but they won't remember what you say. Build people up.”