

Entrepreneur Builds Women's Health Brand

NITESWEATZ ARE NOW IN VOGUE

By Lydia Senn lydia.senn@thepost-news.com

Local entrepreneur and Johns Creek resident, Lesley Hatfield has realized that necessity really is the mother of invention.

Four years ago, while working as a personal trainer, she noticed a client was not keeping up her usual pace.

"She told me she was having night sweats and was tired, I told her to sleep in her work out clothes," said Hatfield.

Through that exchange with her client, Hatfield's company NiteSweatz was born. NiteSweatz is a line of pajamas and lounge wear that uses the same moisture-wicking material used in workout clothes.

Hatfield says she realized there was not a line of pajamas and lounge wear that catered to women who suffered from night sweats caused by peri-menopause, breast cancer or other health related issues.

"A lot of the pajamas for menopausal women were matronly. Just because you are going through the change and are hot at night doesn't mean you can't be hot at night," said Hatfield.

In 2004 she and a friend developed a rough prototype that she used when trying to develop the brand.

"I came up with ideas for the look by opening my closet, and the closets of other women I knew and seeing what they had," she said.

Hatfield traveled to New York's garment district to select the perfect fabric and then worked with a mill that helped her develop her lines look. But it wasn't all that easy for the entrepreneur.

In the midst of developing her line she was dumped by the company she was using to manufacture NiteSweatz. She and the company disagreed on the types of fabrics she wanted to use, Intera Nylon.

"I would come up with an idea and they would tell me no, that it wouldn't work," she said.

Hatfield and the company parted ways.

"It was the best thing that happened to me," she said. "I just had to find somebody to share my own vision."

Hatfield changed manufacturers, and now uses a company based out of China. The mill has worked with Nylon and silk fabrics and was ready for the direction she was headed.

However, once she had the product made, she still needed a way to market her product and get it into the hands of consumers. She and her husband, an art director developed her logo and began branding the line.

"We believe in branding. It is key," she said.

Hatfield also hired a Public Relations company to get the word out about NiteSweatz. She also went to trade shows and sold the product herself.

"This is a word of mouth product," she said. "Women tend to tell all their friends about a product when they love it."

Hatfield banked on the word of mouth method, focusing more on the quality of product than on flashy advertising.

"Women tend to collect NiteSweatz too, when the new season rolls out they are on it," she said.

She also grew her business by letting go of some of the facets she had been holding onto. For months Hatfield filled orders in the office behind her kitchen and used her garage as a shipping and receiving warehouse. Eventually her line out grew her garage and she found a company to handle some of those demands.

"I learned that you can't do everything. That is key for a lot of people who own a business, you have to let it go to let it grow," she said.

NiteSweatz has seen an abundance of growth, since hiring someone to promote of the companies website, www.nitesweatz.com, Internet sales have increased from \$3,000 monthly to \$30,000 monthly.

It also hasn't hurt that the brand has been featured in several national media outlets including the CNBC talk show "The Big Idea" with Donny Deutsch.

Most recently the brand has also been mentioned in O Magazine, Oprah Winfrey's publication and Susan Nethero, owner of Intimacy, a chain of upscale lingerie stores wrote a piece for the magazine called "Does Your Underwear Need an Overhaul?"

The line of thong underwear was featured in the magazine piece. Hatfield saw an increase in underwear sales and an overall increase in brand awareness.

"Every time NiteSweatz is mentioned it is a good thing. Our marketing has been pretty viral," Hatfield said.

Her line of loungewear, daywear and pajamas are not just for women going through menopause, Hatfield house found that her brand appeals to all markets.

"I don't have hot flashes and I wear them, they feel good, they are comfortable," she said.

Hatfield's brand has grown in overall sales, last year they sold \$1 million in apparel and she hopes to double those sales in 2008. In fact, her goal is to increase her company in every facet.

"I want to continue to find newer and better quality of fabric," she said.

She also wants to increase her company's brand awareness and recognition. She says she looks up to Sarah Blakely founder and owner of Spanx, a line of body shaping hosiery and products.

"I love what she has done with her line, and for women. I want to be that for baby boomers," Hatfield said.

The NiteSweatz line can be found in 450 boutiques throughout the country and on-line. The product caters to women of all shapes and sizes ranging in sizes from 0 to 23.



Advice from the Pajama Pioneer:



Lesley Hatfield offers advice to other women looking to enter the business world: "I would tell any woman to act on good ideas. Women are full of great ideas, but sometimes it is scary if you do have an idea to act on it," she said. "Go for it. You never know."

Protect yourself.

Hatfield suggests copyrighting or patenting good ideas.

Put together a good team.

Hatfield made the decisions from the beginning to hire good attorney's, accountants and PR directors. "Good people that will support you are your best asset," she said.

Let others help you.

Hatfield says that business owners, particularly women sometimes are unwilling to relinquish control of certain parts of their businesses.

"For some women it is like letting go of their baby, but if you want to succeed then you have to let parts of it go. To allow your business to grow, you have to give it up."

Phenomenal Women of North Fulton

ABWA HONORS 10 AREA WOMEN



The ABWA honored 10 exceptional women as their 2008 Phenomenal Women of North Fulton.

By Liz Flowers editor@thepost-news.com

Each year, the Fulton County chapter of the American Business Women's Association chooses 10 women they believe exude the qualities of leadership and determination needed in the business world.

And with each passing year, we are reminded why North Fulton County is an exemplary place to live and work, and we wonder how the organization will be able to find 10 more qualified women for the following year's awards.

In her opening ceremony remarks at Roswell Founders Hall, Carolyn Bufton Elman, CEO of ABWA said today's business women are "awash in conflicting views within a diverse workforce."

Elman talked about the clash of generational work styles, views and mindsets, providing examples of businesswomen running companies, while also caring for children and aging parents. She described today's Baby Boomer woman as the quintessential balancer of work and life.

Comparing Baby Boomers with Gen-X workers and other younger generation workers, Elman said today's workforce is more peer-to-peer.

"It's not top down. There is no center. It's polycentric and the rules are made to be changed," said Elman.

Elman presented awards to ten women who have figured out how to manage well in the changing work environment, while juggling their ever-changing families.

Kay Brown, Cheryl Greenway, Gayle Horton, Lynn McIntyre, Annelies McMorran, Wendy Reed, Kim Renner, Debby Stone, Dana Tanner and Margi Urquhart received crystal awards to mark the occasion.

Kim Renner, a Johns Creeker, was honored for her work at Northview High School. The community volunteer serves as Northview's Business Partner Liaison and is the driving force behind many fundraising events for the school's Academic Enrichment Fund.

When Renner isn't volunteering at Northview, she can be found helping the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Hands on Atlanta, Jump Rope for Life or the Broadway Dreams Foundation. Renner has consistently held a PTSA position for the past 14 years.

Another honoree, Debby Stone of Alpharetta was honored as the Founder and President of InterVision Group, LLC, for providing coaching, consulting and facilitation to lawyers and their firms. Stone also works with the Georgia Roundtable of Women Entrepreneurs, a mentoring organization. She's also the co-president of Georgia Coach Association.