

Shop's sweet smell of success

Northport staple
Hydrangea Home
continues to grow

SMALL BUSINESS Q&A

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Special to Newsday

Hydrangea Home started as a home-based business out of Dawn Mohrmann's Kings Park garage in 1995 and is now a popular Northport destination for customers looking for floral arrangements, gifts, art supplies — and even selfies.

The 53-year-old mother of four started with dried flowers — a craft trend in 1995, though she said it continues to have periods of popularity, now with faux flowers mixed in. Mohrmann sold on consignment to Long Island stores and set up an Etsy shop. But her next goal was to open a storefront in Northport, a town she said is supportive of the arts.

Hydrangea Home opened in a 600-square-foot storefront in 2017 in an alley off the harbor town's Main Street and moved to its current site in 2019.

Last summer, Mohrmann was able to expand to the adjoining storefront and now has a 1,200 square-foot shop. She hired one full-time employee and five part-timers to handle the resulting increased flow of customers who are drawn to the fragrance — mostly lavender — and the selection of dried flowers and gift items. For Mohrmann, it's the realization of a long-term business plan that allows her "to create not just a place to shop, but a whole experience."

While many of Hydrangea Home's customers are local, she said they also come "from the city and all over the Island."

How do you describe your business?

I call it an artful lifestyle shop because in addition to home décor, I have the tools for people to do their own creating, whether it's with florals or art supplies. We're a popular spot for gifts because customers know they can find something unique. The shop is



Dawn Mohrmann's Hydrangea Home shop expanded in August. It features florals, fragrances, jewelry and bath and spa products.

AT A GLANCE

- **Hydrangea Home, Northport**
- **What it does:** An artful lifestyle shop that sells dried flowers, fragrances, décor, art supplies and jewelry
- **Leadership:** Dawn Mohrmann, owner
- **Annual sales:** In 2023, sold 670 arrangements from \$15 to \$450 each; 1,600 stems at about \$9 each; 380 wreaths around \$30 each; 866 bunches averaging \$13 each; 1,700 candles and diffusers at about \$24 each; 1,000 pieces of jewelry, \$20 each.
- **Employees:** Six
- **Founded:** 1995

always evolving to meet what I feel my customers are looking for, but also needs to reflect my own style and aesthetic.

Where do you get your products?

In addition to what I make, I'm buying items from over 50 small businesses. I try to keep

the majority handmade in the U.S. There are some imports like lavender from France.

What are your top items?

Florals are a good part of the business. We sell arrangements, stems so people can make their own arrangements, wreaths and bouquets. Home fragrance — candles and infusers — is another high-selling area. Jewelry and bath and spa products like soaps, neck wraps, eye pillows and room sprays are also popular.

Where did you get the startup money?

It was personal money from the start. We grew it small. And my husband does all of the building for my displays and construction, so the cost there was minimal. But of course we're always investing more into the business as we grow.

What is your biggest challenge?

I think doing everything myself. I'm starting to delegate and hired a bookkeeper and a full-time person. Everyone that works here creates so I don't

want to become the manager of the creators. I want to get back to creating myself at home so I'll still be working but a little bit more uninterrupted.

How do you get customers?

I have an amazing, loyal group of customers who return over and over, many from the craft show days. But I also get new customers through word-of-mouth. I get people in here all the time who said they were sent by a customer. Social media is probably my best way to market. Instagram is my No. 1 marketing tool. I have to be careful about what I put on social media because people will run in within the hour and I have to make sure I have enough. Also, people like to do selfies around the dried flowers and if they tag us on social media, they get entered into a raffle.

How many hours a week do you work?

Our busiest time are the holidays when we usually do 100 hours a week. It's seven days, 12 to 14 hours a day and beyond. Normally it's still over well over 60 hours, but it doesn't re-

ally feel like work when you're coming to a place like this.

What is the best thing about owning your own business?

For me it's creating a place for people to come and relax and we create things that make them happy. The shop has become a great social meeting place as well as a place to be creatively inspired or even to just unwind at the end of a busy day.

What do you hope your business will look like in five years?

Continuing to support small businesses and creating more handmade art products that you can't find anywhere else.

Do you have advice for anyone thinking of starting a business like this?

You must be passionate about it because it does take over your life quite a bit. I do get a lot of people that come in and say this is what I want to do when I retire. Usually when you retire, you want to work less and this is not working less at all. But if you love doing it, it doesn't feel like work.