

5 Questions with Debbie Stachowski, co-owner of Your Perfect Fit in Boalsburg

By Jennifer Babulsky

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Your Perfect Fit co-owners Debbie Stachowski (sitting) and her daughter, Marie Weaver.

The path to success in business can start in a variety of places — a good concept, nudging of supportive loved ones, or even a desire to be your own boss. For Debbie Stachowski of Lock Haven, her venture into entrepreneurship started with a need for a good bra. Three years ago, the now 44 year old was told by her doctor she needed to get a properly fitting bra after pinching a nerve in her neck. After being disappointed with the options locally, she was forced to go to Philadelphia for the service.

The trek to Philadelphia sparked the business bug. On Mother's Day of 2006, she and her daughter, Marie Weaver of Spring Mills, decided to open their own boutique. After a year of attending classes, preparing a business plan, and undergoing four days of training at The Fitting Touch in Birmingham, AL, the two opened Your Perfect Fit on August 15, 2007, at 101 W. Main St., Boalsburg. The shop offers free bra fittings, along with a wide assortment of bras, pajamas, and pampering products such as lotions, soaps, and even spa slippers.

Recently, Stachowski answered questions about her business and its future, including the bond of working with her daughter.

T&G: You co-own the business with your daughter. What's that like to not only have a business run by two women, but also by a mother-daughter team?

Stachowski: Running a mother-daughter business together offers many advantages, and along with everything else, it has

disadvantages, too. There is nothing better than to work with someone you love, trust, and know they care about your business like you do. A disadvantage is we can't do things together like we used to because one of us is always at the store. I'm just glad that she keeps the store cleaner than the way she kept her bedroom when she was little!

T&G: What are the benefits you've found in owning your own business?

Stachowski: I wanted to create a positive and relaxing atmosphere for women to feel completely comfortable by using music, aromatherapy, and personal attention. One thing that I never realized was how women would appreciate us for the service we provide to them, as much as we appreciate having them as our customer. We hear compliments like, "What a nice store you have. It is so relaxing in here." Pleasing them pleases us.

T&G: What are some challenges you've faced since opening the business — any particular challenges to being a female entrepreneur compared to your male counterparts?

Stachowski: My daughter and I had a big disappointment when we learned we could not get approved by Medicare to do mastectomy fittings. Women who have had mastectomies go through so much, and we really wanted to help them locally. We haven't given up completely and are working on other possibilities. I haven't found any challenges from male counterparts, and it could be because of the line of business we're in. I find it interesting that two of our sales reps are males and really know the business.

T&G: Have you noticed any trends with other female entrepreneurs — more of them, less of them?

Stachowski: Mom-and-Pop shops and father-son partnerships have been around for a long time. I think mother-daughter businesses are coming into their own. We are actually the second mother-daughter business in Boalsburg. The most important thing a woman should do before starting her own business is educate herself.

T&G: In many ways, your business deals with image and the female form. How important is image to most women you think, and is there a pressure to look good?

Stachowski: In today's business world, your personal appearance is just as important as the work you do. We all want to look our best regardless if it's at work or home. Women are so pleased at the difference, and understand completely when we explain the fitting and appearance process. One comment we get a lot is "Where have you been?" So many women appreciated the look of their new bra they asked if they could get swimwear that would give them the same great look. So we now carry swimwear that is sized by the bra. Women have come in asking for a minimizing bra. Most women want their breasts to look smaller. We don't carry any minimizing bras because this particular style pushes the breast to the center of your chest, giving you no separation, which runs into the waistline. When the breast is lifted and separated within the body frame, it makes you look taller and thinner. I haven't had a customer that didn't want to look taller and thinner. Women look terrific in their clothes and can't believe it's all because of a proper-fitting bra.

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