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Facing a change, two Princeton women find new way of life in home-based businesses

March 24, 2012

By Bonnie Schultz

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Stacy McGuigan always had a natural talent for throwing parties. She was always the one in her family to throw her parents anniversary parties, birthday parties for her brothers and bridal showers for friends.

But her active life as a party planner changed once she became a mom. To take care of her baby, she began to work out of her home for various hotel companies. She even did work for her church, planning everything from a teddy bear tea party to a fashion show.

It wasn't until some timely advice from her husband that McGuigan decided to start her own business.

While the home-based business has always existed, today many people look at it as a viable option when they've been faced with the challenge of rejoining the workforce or, in McGuigan's case, found themselves in need of some flexibility.

Two years ago, McGuigan started "Everyday Celebrations," a party concierge business located in Sewell, New Jersey. McGuigan says she averages two to three parties a month and expects to be profitable by her fourth year.

McGuigan helps her customers celebrate the major milestones in their lives. She works on all sorts of parties, ranging from a child's first birthday to an anniversary.

"I want to plan a party so it's memorable. After the guests leave the party, they still remember it hours later," McGuigan said.

Home-based business owner Karen Tank was also faced with a major change in her life after being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

Once I was diagnosed, I needed time to learn how to live with this condition... my passions had changed to that of coaching and teaching others with diabetes how to adopt new behaviors and lifestyles to better manage their blood sugars and health.

-- Karen Tank, health coach



Karen Tank, pictured, works as a health coach specializing in diabetes management after being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. (Bonnie Schultz/for NewsWorks)

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"Once I was diagnosed," says Tank, "I needed time to learn how to live with this condition... my passions had changed to that of coaching and teaching others with diabetes how to adopt new behaviors and lifestyles to better manage their blood sugars and health."

Tank now works as a health coach based out of Princeton specializing in diabetes management. She started her business in the winter of 2010, when she went back to school at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition to learn how to coach. She now works with 12 clients to find a diet balance that works for them.

Tank feels that having a home-based business gives her flexibility because she is not tied to having to rent an office. She meets clients in her home office and sometimes at the local health food store near her home.

On one Wednesday afternoon, Tank showed Julie Maddocks, who has Type 2 diabetes, the health benefits of kale and demonstrated how to cut it into thin strips to mix into salads.

"Home-based businesses are a huge trend in the Princeton area," Tank said.

"People from the corporate sector who have been laid off, such as someone I know who used to work for Exxon and became a career counselor, are creating situations that are flexible as well as a match for their passions and creative expression. Especially with the current job insecurity, starting a home business can provide more security over time."

Both women feel that it's important to have self-discipline when starting a home-based business. McGuigan says "it's important to get up and get dressed, to treat your home as an office."

Tank feels that you must have the discipline to finish your daily tasks as well as an ability to envision and plan for growth.

Tank and McGuigan aren't alone, other women who also own home-based businesses have become part of Interconnections for Women. The group, created by McGuigan, currently has 27 members. In August, 55 women attended the monthly event.

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