

much. Putting yourself out there is really scary."

Her fears proved to be unfounded and Lil Jewellery is about to celebrate its first birthday with a pop up store in Newtown on June 19-20.

Lil Jewellery now includes Lili's popular pendant earrings as well as necklaces, rings, hair clips, affirmation jewellery and a new men's range.

She runs her business from the pool house out the back of her parents' Newtown home and says the entire process, from designing to making the jewellery, has become like therapy.

"It's so relaxing, I actually get up and look forward to getting into it," she says. "Being a nurse, you don't get to be creative with that, but it's so nice to have this creative outlet."

Her customer base extends from Geelong to Melbourne, Sydney and even Perth.

While young women Lili's age were initially her target market, she says friends of her 14-year-old brother love her products as much as her mum's friends in their 50s.

She sticks to simple, timeless, on-trend, quality jewellery and even asks her loyal buyers what they want to see next.

"I work out what doesn't sell as well and I won't invest in those products any more. I like knowing what my customers want to buy," she says.

As well as her online website, Lili has also sold her jewellery range at local markets, which is her favourite way to meet her loyal customers.

"I had a line of people waiting to look at my stall and I sold out of almost everything," she says of her first market. "I walked away feeling so overwhelmed and I thought, 'I've really achieved something here'."

Lili's first foray into the jewellery world was as an ambitious 14-year-old. She made clay earrings, sold them to fellow students and even had them



Geelong's Lili Gard started her jewellery business Lil Jewellery during lockdown last year. Photos: Alison Wynd

stocked in a couple of local shops. But it proved to be short-lived as school and bit-jobs took over.

Initially, Lili planned to go to university after completing Year 12 — not so much because she wanted to, but she felt it was expected. When she didn't get in, Lili's plans were turned upside down.

"After finishing Year 12 I was so lost. I really struggled with that transitioning from school to adult life and when I didn't get into uni, I really felt like I had failed," she says.

"But not getting into uni, in hindsight, it worked out really well for me because I really had the time to give this business a go.

"I'm the one drawing up the rings or the earrings and I'm the one making them — I get to do it all and I never knew that I could actually do all of that until I tried it, it's not something you learn at school.

"You don't always have to go to uni, you don't have to study, doing something outside the box is OK. You shouldn't be defined by your ATAR.

"I didn't get into uni, I went to TAFE and I was so bummed about it, but had I gone to uni I wouldn't have started this. I'm so grateful this is how it worked out because I've discovered something that I really love to do."

Down the track, Lili hopes to employ a social media team to help grow her business. But right

now she's content being a one-woman show.

"I've learnt so much about myself doing this. I'm not fussed about the figures, but when I see the customer when they order something and it's their third or fourth order, or when people come to each of my markets, it's that customer base that keeps me going," she says.

"People come up to me at the markets and tell me they came just to see me, it makes me feel so happy to hear that."

Lil Jewellery's pop-up store on June 19-20 will be held at 28 Lambert Avenue, Newtown. Follow @liljewellery\_ on Instagram or shop at [liljewellery.com.au](http://liljewellery.com.au)

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