



Doing

What Comes Naturally

By Judith Spitzer

About the only thing Tirza Wibel knew for sure about Spokane was that most every year in June she and her mother shopped at the annual Farm Chicks Antique Show.

Still, a little over two years ago, Tirza, with her husband and five children, moved from Silverton, Oregon, to the Spokane area, where her husband had been offered a position teaching and training athletes for Whitworth University.

One year later Tirza, who previously owned a small public relations firm in Oregon, launched her own small business called Winterwoods Tea Company, specializing in gourmet loose-leaf tea blends using local, organic ingredients.

Today, Tirza is one of 10 million women across the country who are innovating, starting new businesses, creating jobs, and impacting the economy while creating social value.

To say the tea company has taken off is an understatement.

Tirza's entry into the Northwest business community was her first booth at Taste of Coeur d'Alene in August 2014, and the response was positive-plus, she says.

"That first show we did, we sold out of tea and beat out all of our expectations," she adds.

Since then the reception and sales of the company's artisan tea blends have been astounding, she says.

Tirza says the first year was a whirlwind of creating seven flavors of tea, blending the tea at a commercial kitchen at the Greenbluff Grange, and schlepping her products to farmer's markets like the one at Kendall Yards in Spokane. Tirza added more markets as she went, including several wholesale accounts and several local hot spots like Atticus, Indaba Coffee, Brain Freeze Creamery and Main Market Co-op, among others.

"We began by sourcing our ingredients from small, sustainable farms and companies who support our values and we hand-mix all of our original tea blends in the heart of the Pacific Northwest and Spokane's farm country, on beautiful Green Bluff," she says.

Oh yes, and then there is the homeschooling of the kids ages, 13, 10, 5, 4, 3—two girls and three boys—which takes an enormous part of

Taste

THE DIFFERENCE



Taste Catering & Special Events



Find us on Facebook

TASTE

CAFÉ & FINE ART

180 S. HOWARD
509.468.2929

the day. She says she and her husband share those duties and the family belongs to a home school co-op.

Funding Comes Quickly

A Kickstarter campaign Tirza launched in August raised more than \$30,000, to pay for a new commercial kitchen and equipment needed to produce the teas.

The success of the campaign took everyone in her world by surprise.

Tirza reached her goal of \$13,450 during the first two weeks of the online campaign. By the end of the campaign the donated funds totaled about \$16,500 over the initial goal.

"Our sales are projected to more than quadruple this year and we've added a dozen wholesale accounts on top of selling at local farmer's markets, art festivals and various events around town," she adds.

She already has added eight more teas to the Wintergreen Tea menu. Customers can now choose from 15 different blends of tea that come in resealable pouches.

Tirza says starting her company in Spokane also has given her a way to connect with a community where she didn't know anyone.

"Being at farmer's markets and art shows has made me feel like this is my home because I'm part of the community, and I've invested in meeting people and working with local businesses," she says. "I love entrepreneurship and I want to encourage other moms to blend their passions with being a mom. It's not one or the other."

The Kickstarter campaign has connected

her with even more local people who are starting businesses, especially women business owners.

"I find I'm giving advice to other fledgling small business owners. I've met a lot of women business owners who are doing what I do at the markets, and it's really neat networking with other women," she says. "We support and encourage each other."

Tirza says her success is partly due to her affliction—that of being a workaholic. That and divine providence. She says she prayed about owning a business in which she could involve her family and not feel isolated like she did when she ran her public relations firm in Oregon.

"I wanted something where I could teach my daughters about business and teach them these kinds of entrepreneurial skills so they could make their own money. And I feel like I was in the right place at the right time," she says.

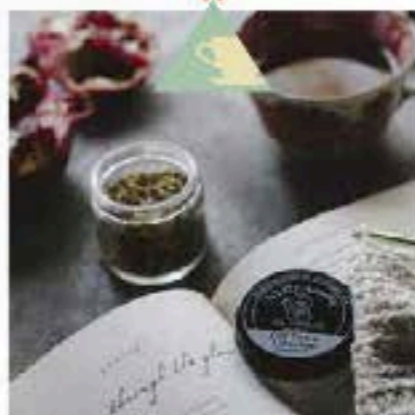
"In every aspect of the business I haven't gotten too caught up in the details and I've let my faith guide me," she adds. "If it's meant to be, it's meant to be."

Leaving a Legacy

These days, Tirza is busy fulfilling Kickstarter reward backorders and says she's excited about designing the commercial kitchen space in her home for her thriving business. The space is actually the basement of her home, which has a separate entrance and its own driveway.

She is moving into the 1,100 square feet of space this month.

"I am moving in and hopefully launch our



G
GRASSROOTS
therapy group

Treatment of attachment, trauma, grief and loss issues for adults and children.



Call (509) 389 1772

1212 N. Washington Street
Suite 204 - One Rock Pointe
Spokane, WA 99201

Grassrootstherapy.com

own website and start doing wholesale orders," she says. "I've made lots of contacts and requests and I haven't had time to pursue those things. We also plan to do the Seattle Gift Show next summer."

She says the company will soon be expanding into health food stores throughout the region, and she is in negotiations with a couple of major grocers, and working with a natural foods broker.

"We anticipate expanding our retail gift accounts in 2016. We've been featured on KYLY Saturday Morning News, on AM 790 KIRB Business Talk Radio and we were featured in the *Spokesman Review* as well," she reports.

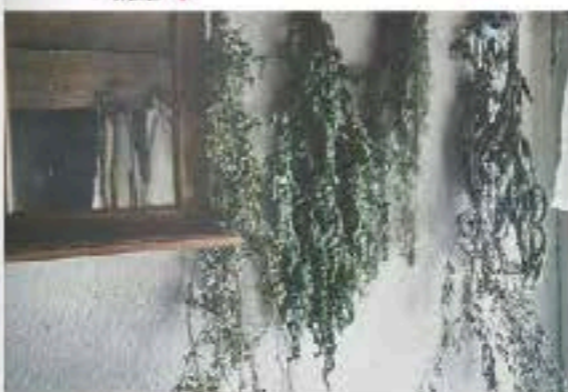
Tirza will have help creating the company's infrastructure via Gonzaga University's New Venture Labs, which provides business consulting to chosen entrepreneurs. The Lab provided Tirza a student project manager, who typically has four to five students who work with new business owners.

Each project provides students with real world experience working with both start-ups and seasoned entrepreneurs, allowing students to learn business skills in an experiential manner.

Could life be any better?

Tirza says it will be. When the new kitchen is complete, she plans to rent space out to other entrepreneurs who need a commercial kitchen, and she's looking forward to paying it forward to other entrepreneurs.

"We're passionate about helping other small businesses in the Spokane area start up and thrive," she says. "There is a lack of affordable commercial kitchens to rent in the Spokane area. We seek to create an incubator type of environment that will allow for collaboration, encouragement and mentorship for emerging businesses here in the Inland Northwest."



Full Lips, Long Lashes and No Lines!
Are you ready for Valentine's?

BOtox ALWAYS \$10/UNIT!

FACE
sarah hamilton

\$100 OFF Juvederm or Restylane with Any Purchase of Botox! (For a Limited Time)

Buy One Latisse and Get the Second for FREE!
(Now through February 28, 2016)

Sarah Hamilton is an Aesthetic RN, CNC & Owner with 12+ Years as an Advanced Injector Trainer & Top 1% Provider of Botox and Dermal Fillers.

509.210.0228 | sarahhamiltonface.com