

Suburban News

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westsidenewsonline.com

Issue No. 27

July 4, 2010

Local entrepreneur wins national competition for business growth

Small shop in Spencerport has worldwide reach

by Kristina Gabalski

If you don't know the hobby of quilting is big business, you're not alone.

"The biggest thing the general public doesn't realize is how big the quilting industry is," says Nancy Dill, President of QuiltWoman.Com.

Dill, who runs QuiltWoman.Com from an office in Spencerport, was recently named a winner of the Make Mine a Million \$ Business™ Competition National Event.

"At the competition, people were fascinated with this business," Dill said.

Nancy purchased QuiltWoman.Com in 2008. The business publishes, markets and distributes quality quilting, sewing and craft patterns and books. "We represent 90 independent designers," Dill explained. "We sell retail on the website and we sell to quilt shops and quilt shop distributors.

QuiltWoman.Com receives orders from all over the world, Dill said, and they are looking to expand their international quilt shop distributors. Currently, they have distributors in several countries including Canada and New Zealand.

"We completely print on demand," Dill explained, "we don't have inventory." All the printing of patterns and books is done in-house in Spencerport. Dill has 15 employees and ships out 6,200 patterns per month as well as books and notions. "Ninety-nine percent of orders that come in go out the same day," she said. Her quilt

shop, Betty's Quilting, Etc., is located next door to the QuiltWoman.Com office.

The Make Mine a Million \$ Business™ Competition was launched in 2005 by Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence and partner American Express OPEN.

Dill traveled to Houston, Texas in February for the competition. She said she had to provide the competition with information about her business' gross sales, job creation and other data over the course of 2009.

"In February (2010), they picked the Top 20. I had to go to a summit in Houston ... there were about 650 attendees," Dill said.

The event included an intensive seven-hour day of coaching, where competitors met to refine a three minute business pitch.

Dill and the other competitors then presented their three-minute business pitch before four judges and an audience, who selected the final ten winners.

"The whole time I was there, I never felt like we were competing, but working together, it was a powerful experience," Dill said of her participation in the competition.

Dill received an award package to help her business break the million-dollar barrier including a business coaching package and a public relations package.

Former winners also have their own Yahoo group, Dill said. "We share information and success stories and we run things by each other - it's a nice group."

The award has also meant more publicity for QuiltWoman.Com. There was an article published on the business in an Irish quilting magazine and a three page article published in a trade magazine, Dill said. Numerous people also approached her about the award at a recent quilt market trade show. "It has put our name out



Quilt enthusiast and entrepreneur **Nancy Dill** stands in front of a colorful quilt that hangs in her QuiltWoman.Com office in Spencerport. Photograph by Kristina Gabalski.

there," Dill said. "It's a win for us and for the whole quilting industry."

Quilting has long been an extremely popular hobby, Dill said. The camaraderie among quilters is a major reason why, she explained.

"Quilters are wonderful people, they are warm and giving," Dill said. Quilters donate much of their work to charity, she added.

Owning both a quilt shop and QuiltWoman.Com has many benefits Dill said. "They work so well; they go hand-in-hand. Having a quilt shop keeps us up on the pulse of what quilters are looking for. Having a retail outlet for patterns also gives us a test market."

Dill said QuiltWoman.Com keeps track of the top 20 selling patterns, so their designers know what quilters are looking for and purchasing.

"Right now it's small, fast projects," she said.