



# Hobby evolves into SUDSY success story

by Sherri Telenko

What started as a soap-making hobby for Waterford resident Lisa Ramey in her cheekily named Dirty Girl Studio, evolved into The Waterford Girl: an online and craft show business that ignites Ramey to create unique product and fragrance combinations. For anyone who's dreamt of turning hobby into profit, it's a dream come true.

It all started with a studio tour visit, some classes in soap making, and a last minute application to a large Burlington summer artisan fair. "I went on the annual studio tour here in Norfolk County and met a woman who sold handmade soap," she tells me over coffee in her well-designed country home. "I thought,

'I'd love to do that,' so I took several professional courses and started making soap for myself and to give away to friends." She also started researching natural products and essential oils. Soon she was buying so many raw ingredients that her husband (a business manager) suggested she sell some to recoup expenses. "So, I asked myself: 'Ok, what does it take to get a business up and running?'"

Several years ago, Ramey applied for her first outdoor artisan show in Burlington. "We were so busy," she says "we could barely raise our heads. We were overwhelmed by the number of people interested in the product." »



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## ■ THE WATERFORD GIRL



» But overwhelmed in a good way. Ramey, a petite and perfectly coiffed, high-energy individual, is fuelled by others enjoying her product, and a desire to invent new soap fragrance combinations such as Fall Sweater (cranberry and fig); Dragon's Blood (amber, incense, Madagascar, vanilla and patchouli); and cinnamon and cranberry seed.

But The Waterford Girl is not just about soap.

"From my hands to yours" is the slogan that graces the clean funky labels on Ramey's hand cream that comes in six fragrances, including 'Man Hands' specially formulated to capture the effervescence of male moisturizing. In addition to hand cream and soap, Ramey personally creates bath salts, lotion sticks, room sprays, soy candles, shampoo bars, lip balm, foaming hand soap, body butter, Epsom salts, and skin balm. There's a special emphasis on handmade even though Ramsey's product line – all crafted from scratch in a home-based studio/manufacturing/soap curing basement – rivals the breadth of mass-produced options. But that's where the similarities end.

"Anything made locally by artisans is very trendy now," she says. "People want to know who creates what they consume, and what's in it ... All my ingredients are listed on my website, and anyone can easily contact me regarding allergy concerns." Despite no formal chem-



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istry training, Ramey can recite each ingredient in her products, the benefit to the skin and why it’s there. For instance, her soap foams – but not because of detergents like sodium laureth sulfate – she tells me, but thanks to natural ingredients, such as castor oil.

“People are constantly asking me for things, such as new scents,” Ramey says. “That’s where both my lemon verbena soap and the sexy and soothing combination of lavender and patchouli came from, along with my Man Hand soap.” The next request she’s working on, she says surrounded by three walls of floor-to-ceiling product in her tiny retail space, is men’s shaving soap. That will be product number three in her men’s line, though her shampoo bars are popular with men, especially when travelling because they easily double as body soap and come in a burlap pouch with a pine soap deck. Also, the innovative stick lotion, which rolls up, is solid and airplane friendly.

“I love making product and I do it every day,” she says. “Actually, I love everything about the business from creating new recipes and formulas, to marketing and branding. I work closely with a graphic designer to craft labels. For instance, we are updating our candle tins so each has a unique saying such as ‘The word of

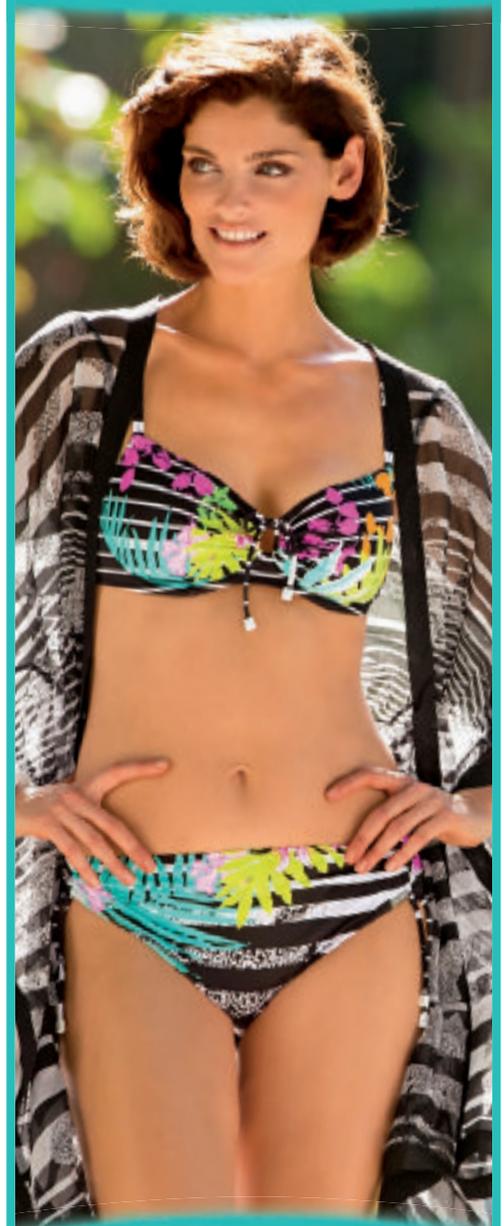
the day ... decompose’

In order to maintain the handmade appeal of her work, production is limited so wholesale isn’t realistic. She supplies a few hand-selected boutiques in the Norfolk area, but sells mainly online ([dirtygirlsoapstudio.com](http://dirtygirlsoapstudio.com)) to primarily Toronto-area customers and directly to consumers at shows such as the Made by Hand show in mid-April at the International Centre near the Airport.

Contributing to The Waterford Girl popularity is not only the quality but the price: soap bars (which take four weeks to cure – who knew?) sell for \$5 each or five for \$20. Customers can order from the website and pick up at her Waterford home studio, or she’ll ship anywhere in Canada for a flat rate of nine dollars. “These products are made from quality ingredients but they are not just for treating yourself,” she says. “They are intended for everyday use ... also, when you use a good soap, you don’t need to moisturize as often.”

So in a way, less is more. A few good quality, slightly irreverent, handmade body and moisturizing products from a small batch supply might be exactly what the local economy ordered to fight the dry winter, and let a little artisan into our daily dirty girl routine. 🍷

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