

## Original wearable art



Jolene Dusyk works on a new creation

BY CHRISTALEE FROESE

Jolene Dusyk's eyes light up as she talks about the pastime that vaulted her into business and changed the direction of her life.

"I've always loved anything shiny, even as a kid I was always attracted to colorful, bright things," says the exuberant 30-year-old.

A massage therapist by trade, Jolene began making jewelry as a sideline 7 years ago. While her early creations of store-bought beads were well-received and purchased by family and friends, it wasn't until 4 years ago that sparks really began to fly in Jolene's creative mind. On a trip to B.C., the Montmartre, Sask. resident heard about a bead-making workshop, and decided on a whim to spend an afternoon learning how to melt glass rods into opulent beads. "It was just such a fascinating thing to me. I remember being mesmerized by the melting glass and the colors. When I came home, I couldn't stop thinking about getting my own torch to make my own beads."

It wasn't long before a distant dream became a reality, and Jolene was spending hours creating beads of various shapes and colors in her father-in-law's machine shop. Her early beads were simple, single-colored orbs, with hours of experimentation later resulting in various shapes, colors and sometimes even tiny pigs, cats and bees. As Jolene became more confident in her glass-shaping ability, she began creating necklaces, earrings and bracelets.



JoJo Beads are unique, weird and wonderful

Having impressed the Montmartre crowd with her abilities, Jolene decided to take her show on the road. "I did my first show in Carlyle and I just remember having the ugliest booth in the world — we couldn't even find it when we came back from the bathroom," laughs the vivacious glass-smith. "But the most amazing thing is that people were actually buying my stuff. I did better than I dreamed at that show and I just thought it was phenomenal that people were buying my junk."

The initial flame had been ignited, leaving Jolene wondering if she could make a living at something that had started out as a fun experiment. Her answer came 3 years ago when Montmartre's Economic Development Committee (EDC) began exploring the idea of a business incubator where several retail stores would be located under one roof.

"When the EDC approached me, it was like someone giving you the permission to do it," says Jolene. "Sometimes we doubt ourselves, but we have that glimmer inside saying I think I can do it and if someone comes along and says, 'yes you can,' then it just lights that fire." While the EDC project didn't come to fruition, Jolene opened her own business incubator one year ago. She purchased a small house on Montmartre's main street, establishing space for her business, as well as 3 others. All spaces are filled (2 hairdressers and a Kindermusic program) and Jolene has established a bead-making studio and retail outlet in the refurbished downtown building.

Jolene still hits the road to numerous craft shows throughout the prairies, and retails her jewelry at her JoJo Beads Studio, the Mackenzie Art Gallery and WP Gardens in Regina. Her love of glass has now turned into a three-quarter time job, with massage therapy taking up just one-quarter of her working hours. With her JoJo Beads jewelry selling as fast as she can create it, Jolene has proven to prairie shoppers, and to herself, that rural business success is possible.

For more information on JoJo Beads, visit [www.jojobeads.com](http://www.jojobeads.com)

### WHY HAS YOUR BUSINESS SUCCEEDED?

I started out with little steps, first selling from my home, then at shows, then at my own shop. The investments I made were small and gradual. At the time, they were huge to me, like a \$1,500 kiln, but it wasn't like I was spending \$100,000 to start up. I'd make smaller purchases, pay them off and then keep building.

What kind of planning and preparation did you do before you opened for business? I really didn't do very much planning in terms of formal plans and budgets. I think if I had done that, it would have scared me. So I just went ahead, based on the knowledge that nobody else in Saskatchewan was doing glass beads at that time and it was a new thing here. A lot of why I went ahead was to be one of the first on the market with handmade glass beads.

Challenges of operating in rural Saskatchewan? One of my biggest challenges is getting people to take me seriously and to understand that this isn't just a hobby. Sometimes they don't value my time or my product as much because they think of it as a craft or a hobby, but it's my business and I have to charge a price that allows me to make a living at it.

Opportunities presented by doing business in rural Saskatchewan? One of the great things is that I'm able to have a retail space for myself and others that I can afford. It's still an expense, but a house or commercial space in rural Saskatchewan is relatively cheap to buy, especially when you compare it to city prices. I can have a studio and a retail space, and I can help others who want to get into business too by providing them with inexpensive space. That's something I only could have done in a rural community.

Christalee Froese writes from Montmartre, Sask.