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GAZETTE**🔗 Shop goes from hobby to livelihood**

Ann Huszka Rea, 33, is owner of Waxing Moon Candle Company, which provides handmade candles and soaps enriched with pure essential oils, organic botanicals and natural herbal extracts. She started making candles in college 13 years ago, using the trial and error method. Waxing Moon officially became a business in 2000. Her workshop is currently located in the garage of her Southampton home.

"Because Waxing Moon started off as a hobby, I initially didn't put a lot of thought into it. Now that it is growing so rapidly, I need to devise a business plan and decide which direction to go. The workshops have provided a foundation for that," said Rea. She was also able to do some valuable networking with other participants in the workshop.

Rea does a few big craft shows every year; she also does a lot of home parties, which provide her with an excellent opportunity to speak with potential customers and get valuable feedback. During the past year she started working on wholesale and private label arrangements and farther afield, including New York, Connecticut, California, Wisconsin, Arkansas and Korea.

Between working full-time at the Eric Carle museum and making candles, Rea has to work many late nights completing orders. "Thankfully, my husband is incredibly supportive. We are currently house-hunting and my workshop space will be a tremendous consideration in the home we choose."

While Rea is thinking of the feasibility of doing Waxing Moon full-time at home, she does not plan to open a retail location anytime soon. "That's what the business plan is about - trying to find the right balance between passion, work and family, while still being able to pay the bills."

Another challenge was conducting the research necessary to develop her product line. Rea found there is much more to designing a candle than just choosing its scent and color. Everything must be considered, from the type of container and wax, to the size and material of the wick, and most importantly the pouring temperature of the wax.

Rea said she found the workshops helpful because they provided her with the tools that she needed to start writing her business plan and identified local resources that will be helpful to her as the business grows.



CAROL LOLLIS Ann Rea, of Waxing Moon Candle Co., with candles from her Chakra collection in her studio in Easthampton.

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