



Canadian home-based framer enjoys success

Former computer programmer enjoys second career as framer

Canadian framer **Karen Haverstock** swapped a mouse for moulding and matting after quitting a career as a computer programmer and opening **Haverstock Creative Designs** in Nova Scotia.

Haverstock, who graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree from **Dalhousie University** in Halifax, became an at-home mom after the birth of her second child in 1992.

After taking courses in mat cutting and building frames through a local continuing education program, she caught the framing bug – and in January 1998, opened Haverstock Creative Designs, using half the rec room of her house in Dartmouth, N.S.

“I thought framing would make a good home-based business – I'd be home for my children and, hopefully, earn money at the same time,” she says.

Karen Haverstock, owner of Haverstock Creative Designs in Bedford, Nova Scotia, Canada, is a home-based framer with a studio in her basement and garage.

After dabbling in crafts, such as dried floral arrangements and wreaths and painted flower pots, she focused solely on custom picture framing.

In 1999, her husband's job transfer took the family to Calgary, Alberta, where she set up a home framing studio.

"I had a small, but successful home-based framing business," she says. "I met many wonderful people and had the pleasure of being the framer for a local artist and good friend, **Dawn Heinemeyer**, who specializes in western art."

Five years later, the family returned to Bedford, Nova Scotia, where Haverstock Creative Designs got its third start, this time in her basement with an area off the garage for cutting and assembling frames.

"I have a good selection of moulding and mat samples and a variety of framed display pieces hanging on the walls," she says. "The walls of my house are covered with examples of my framing, which I'm happy to show off to customers."

One-woman band

As the sole employee, Haverstock, who joined **PPFA** in 2006, does everything, including design, creating frames, photo restorations, bookkeeping, ordering and picking up materials, and marketing. Her accountant husband helps with year-end bookkeeping, and her sister helps with year-end inventory.

Haverstock offers a wide range of custom picture framing: photographs, prints, pastels, watercolors, acrylics and oils on canvas, needlework, and shadow boxes. She does fillets, wrapped deep bevels, fabric-wrapped mats and liners, flexible fillets, hand-painted bevels, reverse bevels, multiple mat openings, oval and circular mat openings, stacked mouldings, and more.

She does photo restoration and photo-to-art services, outsourcing more complex restorations.

Hours are by appointment only, with daytime, evening, and weekend appointments available.

"Customers have my undivided attention during their personal design consultation, which I like to think makes them feel they are getting great customer service," she says.

"I pride myself in the personal, high-quality customer service I provide. I try to go above and beyond what is expected of me, sometimes throwing in 'extras,' such as upgrading glazing for small frames at no extra charge; sourcing military memorabilia – including cap badges, shoulder flashes, and crests – for customers; ordering and picking up engraved nameplates from a local business; carrying frames to the customer's car; and sometimes delivering frames to a home.

"I don't have a visualization program, but I will often take photos of moulding/

mat combinations and email designs to customers."

No job is too small; if a customer wants a mat cut or a piece of broken glass replaced, she will accommodate their needs. She limits frame sizes to a maximum 32-by-40 inches, due to space constraints. Her equipment includes a **C&H** 40-inch pro straight-line mat cutter, **Morso** chopper, and **Cassese** CS88 V-nailer.

"I have many satisfied, repeat customers, and some customers love my work so much they send me things to frame even though they have moved as far away as Ottawa and Saskatoon. I have a large bulletin board in my studio where I display many thank-you notes from customers."

Haverstock upgrades her skills by consulting books and DVDs, subscribing to *Picture Framing Magazine* and *Decor* magazine, and attending her first **PMA Canada Expo** last year, where she took PPFA education sessions from **Jim Miller**, MCPF, GCF, and **Karla Elder**, CPF, GCF.

Shadow box specialty

Military memorabilia shadow boxes are a specialty, and Haverstock has framed about 100. Her father served in the Canadian Navy, and she grew up in Halifax, home to **Canadian Forces Base Halifax**, with navy, army, and air force in the area.

She gives a 10 percent discount to active and retired Canadian military personnel and to customers of military memorabilia shadow boxes – "Just my small way of honoring the service provided by our veterans."

She gets many word-of-mouth referrals, as well as referrals from **Murray Lee**, owner of **Lee's Medal Mounting** in Dartmouth; she and Lee have a reciprocal business relationship. She has advertised in the local military newspaper, *Trident*, as well as **The Royal Canadian Legion** newsletter.

She has framed cap badges, shoulder flashes, uniform buttons, regimental crests, dog tags (metal and the older, leather versions), a Morse code key, the Red Hackle and an argyle sock from the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada, a soldier's pay book, a food ration booklet, a Legion beret, World War I death plaques, and a bayonet with matching sheath.

"Most military memorabilia shadow boxes include a set of medals, and I always suggest my customers include a photo of



Haverstock keeps framing samples on her walls and a "Wall of Thanks" with letters from grateful customers.



This military memorabilia shadow box for a retired naval aviator uses fabric wrapping with Air Force tartan. Haverstock offers a discount for military personnel.



Haverstock does photo restorations and photo-to-art services, outsourcing more complex restorations.

the person to whom the medals belong, as it really personalizes the shadow box,” she says. “Some can be opened so medals are accessible for wearing on special occasions, such as Remembrance Day.

“For the food ration booklet, I scanned a few food stamps, printed them on heavy cardstock, and displayed them underneath the booklet,” she says.

“Every item is mounted in an archival manner through the use of methods such as clear polyester film mounts, formed rod mounts, and hand-stitching.”

She is particularly proud of a shadow box for a naval aviator, whose husband brought in photos, five crests, an engraved

nameplate, and a piece of Air Force tartan for a backdrop. Haverstock used **Bainbridge** midnight suede mat board and treated the tartan as an accent, with one inch showing beneath a top mat of matching midnight suede mat board.

Haverstock, who had not taken hands-on fabric-wrapping classes, studied the “Fabric Wrapping 101” DVD by **Baer Charlton**, CPF.

“With some great ‘tartan wrapping’ pointers via email from the fabric-wrapping wiz himself, I got a nice-looking tartan-wrapped mat, with lines centered and straight,” she says. “The customer and his wife were ecstatic.”

Haverstock also frames sports memorabilia, especially hockey jerseys, medals, news articles, and hockey pucks.

“**Sidney Crosby**, captain of the **Pittsburgh Penguins**, grew up near Bedford. His jerseys are quite popular, especially after he scored the winning overtime goal for Team Canada against the United States to win the gold medal in the 2010 Winter Olympics this past February,” she says.

Her shadow boxes

have included christening gowns, a drum cymbal and drumsticks, silver spoons, baby moccasins, a nurse’s cap and suture scissors, a baby’s plaster footprints, a child’s plaster hand molds, crystal plates, jewelry, purses, military and sports memorabilia, and more.

“Although this type of framing can be very time-consuming and complicated, the objects displayed in shadow boxes tell such interesting stories,” she says. “I feel privileged and honored to be asked to create a shadow box I know will be treasured for years to come.”

A worldwide traveler asked her to frame 72 pieces of paper currency. Haverstock used nonglare Invisi-mount archival-quality polypropylene product from **Attach-EZ Inc.**

“Each piece of currency was encapsulated with the Invisi-mount to a piece of mat board cut slightly smaller than the size of the currency,” she says. “The currency was then floated on the mounting board at various heights using spacers of mat board and Fome-Cor to give it a three-dimensional effect. As the currency was varying sizes and colors, it was a challenge to design a layout that was interesting, not enormous – although it did end up being 30-by-38.5 inches – and didn’t look messy.

“The customer chose **Tru Vue** Museum Glass for the glazing. He and his wife were extremely happy with the end



Haverstock framed 72 pieces of paper currency for a worldwide traveler, using nonglare Invisi-mount from Attach-EZ Inc. and Tru Vue Museum Glass.

result and told me they've received many compliments."

Marketing moxie

As a shy person, Haverstock finds it a challenge promoting her framing business. Word-of-mouth referrals are her biggest source of business, followed by her website, www.haverstockcreatedesigns.com, which has brought in numerous new customers. **Facebook** will be her next foray.

"My customers have been kind in permitting me to display photos of finished frames on my website," she says. "I ask permission when customers pick up their frame, and the majority are more than happy to agree."

Haverstock was the first official licensee for L.I.F.E. (aka Local Independent Framing Expert), a marketing idea from framer **John Barlowe**, owner of **Frame Shop Art Gallery & Gifts** in Holland, Ohio. She has incorporated the L.I.F.E. marketing program on her website, business cards, gift certificates, and newspaper advertisements.

"The 'support your local business' movement is gaining strength in this area, and customers are happy to know they're supporting a locally owned, independent business," she says.

Giving back to the local community

Haverstock often donates gift certificates – and sometimes framed prints – for fund-raising auctions for charities and local sports teams.

She heavily supports the **ALS Society of Nova Scotia (ALSNS)** since losing her mother to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (aka **Lou Gehrig's** disease). She has donated gift certificates and framed artwork to their fund-raising efforts, as well as framing to display in the ALSNS office. Her daughter painted a triptych of a cornflower, the ALS emblem, now framed and on display at the ALSNS office.

She offers "framing coupons" as a fund-raising opportunity to ALSNS and to the Nova Scotia Junior Racquetball team; when redeemed with a framing job, she donates 10 percent of the cost of framing to the group.

She teamed with Canadian artist **James Long**, whose "History of Pride and Tradition" limited edition print depicts the 250-year history of Nova Scotia firefighting. For every firefighter print framed, she donated 5 percent of the proceeds to the **Nova Scotia Fire Fighters Burn Treatment Society**. She also donated a framed print to



Haverstock framed this heavy World War I Death Plaque – almost 5 inches in diameter – using formed rod mounts.

the **Firefighters' Museum of Nova Scotia**, in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

She donates leftover mat and foam board to the local high school art program.

"Teachers love the small fallouts with the bevel edges, used by students as a 'squeegee' when making abstract art paintings," she says.

She created and donated art tags for a local youth art show, showing each student's name, title of the artwork, school, and grade. The show had more than 90 entries this year.

Home-based advantages, disadvantages

The biggest advantage of working from home is being there for her kids and school activities. Haverstock schedules customer appointments around personal appointments; and her commute involves simply walking downstairs. It can, however, be difficult to separate work from home time.

Some suppliers will not sell to home-based businesses, but local framing distributors, especially **National Art Limited** in Halifax, have been very supportive.

Storage space is limited; so while she purchases multiple cases of glass for a volume discount and buys Fome-Cor by the case, for mat boards and moulding, she usually just buys enough to finish a frame.

Haverstock's home-based business may be small, but it is successful.

"Amazingly enough, despite the recession last year, 2009 was my best sales year ever." ♦



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