

WORK

PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

BERKO SAYS

Find out about some of the awards that people in business have received and some of the jobs they've taken in the Cape Fear region. 2E

Columnist Malcolm Berko advises a reader on a company that has come up with a new way to fight AIDS. 3E

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Looking for deals? Retail Details columnist Judy Royal has the scoops at Retail.StarNewsOnline.com

OFFICE LIFE



**INTERPERSONAL
EDGE**
DANEEN SKUBE

Got lemons
at work?
Make some
lemonade

Question: I have had several really out-of-the-blue work crises this year that have me feeling shocked and dismayed. I was raised to think good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. The worst part is that I've had co-workers with better fortune saying I must deserve my bad luck. Am I cursed, and how do I turn my work life around?
Answer: No, you are not cursed. You turn your work life around by not blaming yourself for the adversity that (like gravity) is simply part of the human experience. You can eat right, go to church, be kind to others, work hard and still have bad fortune happen to you like an unexpected cold.

Your smug co-workers are probably not too bright and really need to be reminded of what they can't control. People who believe that bad things happen only to bad people sleep easy at night and feel secure in arrogant omnipotence. The trouble with the fantasy is we can control the universe at work and life will eventually humble us all. What unites us and can help us work together is our awareness of our common vulnerability to unexpected things.

Regular readers of this column know I'm a big fan of exerting influence and control in every situation you can get what you want. But those who think superior interpersonal skills, keen attention, a good heart and hard work are a magic charm against adversity are bound to be sorely disappointed.

As a therapist and executive coach for the last 30 years, I've heard every explanation my clients can come up with for bad things. Some of my clients blame God, themselves or their own lack of spiritual development. I point out that this reaction leads to feeling crappy about things - which has never been shown to help people fix bad circumstances.

WILMINGTON | Designing a business



Melissa Warren places tags on her Meliciously Yours T-shirts at her home in Wilmington. Warren quit her job as a technical writer for Louisiana Pacific last June to concentrate on her company. Photos by Matt Born

'Melicious' fashion

Resident creates brand of empowering T-shirts inspired by Victorian era

By CECE NUNN
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At a shopping mall in Nashville, Tenn., a few years ago, Melissa Warren noticed a little girl wearing a T-shirt with the words "high maintenance" on the front.

"It just infuriated me a little bit. Does she even know what that means?" asked Warren, a Wilmington resident who was eventually inspired by the encounter to create her own line of T-shirts with what she hopes are more positive messages for women and girls.

The shirts are adorned with such Victorian-inspired images as an ornate bird cage, its door open, with the word "Free" written in cursive; a pair of old-fashioned women's boots with buttons and the words "An Old Soul"; and scales balanced equally with the words "beauty" and "brains," to name a few.

One of Warren's newest T-shirts will feature a girl dressed in full Victorian finery, down to the pantaloons, riding a skateboard accom-



An example of one of the many T-shirt designs from Melissa Warren's Meliciously Yours brand.

panied by the word "Trail-blazer."
"You can still be feminine. You can still be a lady. But you can also be powerful and confident," Warren said, explaining some of the philosophy behind her Meliciously Yours brand of designer T-shirts.

Warren, who has a bachelor's degree in English from the University of North Carolina Wilmington, moved to the Port City from Durham 14 years ago and

worked as a technical writer for Louisiana Pacific, an engineered-wood product company. For more than four years, she was responsible for the marketing of the company's products in Nashville and commuted to Tennessee from Wilmington until she resigned last June to pursue her own business.

After writing about engineered wood for so long, "it was so refreshing to be able to play with colors and fabrics," Warren said. "It's a big switch."

Her husband, software designer and musician Bill Warren, was very supportive, she said.

"It was just something that I was playing with as a hobby and my husband was like, 'You really need to do this.'" Warren said of T-shirt design.

Her use of the word "Melicious" in the name of the brand is explained on Warren's website: "Melicious was a nickname given to me by a co-worker many years ago, a combination of my first

T-SHIRTS

Continued from IE

name, Melissa, and the word delicious. When I was looking for a name for my brand of trendy T-shirts, I decided to use this term of endearment and define it to apply to all women: Me-lic-ious = me + delicious; a wonderfully made, beautiful, unique woman."

The T-shirts are available online at www.melicioustees.com; at Ziabird, a store in the Lumina Station shopping center near Wrightsville Beach; and at stores in Durham and Kill Devil Hills.

"We like to carry small label designers at Ziabird," said Lynn Manock, store owner. "We focus on it. We specialize in it. We like the brand, and it seemed like a natural fit for us and a little bit of a departure from our normal jewelry lines."

After sketching out rough concepts for the shirts, Warren works with three professional designers to come up with the final images. Meliciously Yours T-shirts are manufactured by Next Level Apparel, with the fabric made in the United States and sent overseas to be assembled. Her latest designs cost \$24 to \$28, and she has a pink, toddler version of the

TO LEARN MORE

To order or find out more about Meliciously Yours T-shirts, visit the brand's website at www.melicioustees.com.

beauty-and-brains shirt that sells for \$18.99 on her website.

To Warren, "a T-shirt is like a billboard" that advertises the wearer's personality. One of her most popular products, the "Free" T-shirt with the open bird cage, was inspired by art of the Victorian era that included young girls and locked bird cages to symbolize virginity and the oppression of women as

kept beings.

In addition to being featured at a trunk show at Ziabird recently, Warren's T-shirts were selected to be included in the celebrity gift bags during the third annual performance of "The Vagina Monologues" at the V-Day benefit in Santa Monica, Calif.

Just last week, her T-shirts were accepted at The Artful Living Group, an art center that also has a retail shop in Carolina Beach.

"It's really cool to mesh your passion with being able to make a living at it," Warren said.

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