

## Pretty Things for New Beginnings

The intrepid search for the unique gift can be exhausting. Your feet begin to ache as you enter and then exit boutique after boutique. Rare as they are, the hunt for parking spaces frustrates and embitters. By the end of the day, you've bought nothing, accomplished very little and regret to inform that you have yet to find the perfect gift.

Mandy Fristoe, creator and owner of **polkadots & moonbeams**, a purveyor of "unique gifts for new beginnings," would like to save you the hassle. What originally began as a hobby has turned into a full-fledged, internet-based occupation. With one-of-a-kind gifts for every occasion from new babies to new homes, polkadots & moonbeams is simplifying the art of gift giving. And it all began with the birth of her first son.

After maternity leave from her position with American Heart Association in December 2002, Fristoe knew she did not want to return and chose, instead, to remain with her newborn son and pursue a livelihood from home. It was then she began designing chenille photo pillows.

Fristoe toured local crafts fairs, but customer interest and sales were minimal. It was on a weekend away with her husband in Corolla, NC that her luck began to change. Fristoe approached the manager of a small specialty store, "The Cottage Collection," and described her product. The manager told her to send a price list and samples.

"I didn't have samples, and I sure didn't have a price list," said Fristoe. "So I went home, created some pieces, produced a price list and tried to make it look as professional as I could."

A few weeks later, Fristoe filled her first shipment order for the North Carolina boutique: "A light bulb went off in my head," Fristoe said. "If this upscale store is interested in my products, then maybe other stores will be too."

Fristoe set to work, creating and gathering samples, contacting local and national stores, and learning the ropes of becoming a small business owner. She learned how to do everything herself, from writing and distributing press releases to personally shipping all purchase orders to eventually creating and updating the company web page. Fristoe is, for all intents and purposes, the singular driving force behind the company's success.

In three short years, Fristoe has successfully recruited more than 45 artisans from around the country, designed and managed the company web page and marketed her own chenille line to stores in twenty states (23 locations in Georgia alone), and British Columbia, Canada.

Fristoe offers personalized items for new beginnings, including enamel buckets for new babies, wedding tiles for newlyweds, original



**Mandy Fristoe internet-based company, [www.polkadotsonline.com](http://www.polkadotsonline.com), specializes in unique gifts for new beginnings, including presents for new homes, new babies and newlyweds, just to name a few.**

wall art for new houses and decorative crosses for baptisms. Fristoe designs her own chenille baby and children's accessories line including, blankets, burp cloths and assorted other accessories. All products are top-of-the-line, stamped with Fristoe's seal of approval: "I don't endorse and market anything that I myself wouldn't love to receive."

Having successfully created and managed her wholesale and web-based, gift-giving company, Fristoe is looking to the future. Her sons are growing up, and her list of customers is fast increasing. What's next for this entrepreneur, work-at-home, superwoman?

"A lot of customers are clamoring for me to create a catalog," said Fristoe. "I have visions of opening a store when my younger son is old enough to attend kindergarten. I would love to open one in the Fan or Libbie and Grove."

Whatever her plans, Fristoe is sure to succeed. As her experience has proven, all you need is a little ingenuity, a strong idea and a lot of drive. ■

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