

The Blue Giraffe
Debbie Taylor and
Christi Sheffield

Ava's Attic
Courtney Hood and
Susan Henry

**3 Dogs and a
Chick and Cupcakes
by the Beach**
Nicole & Vanessa Poch

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THESE MOTHER-DAUGHTER DUOS GREW INTO BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES

BY LISA MCKINNEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT HOLSTEIN

There is no family dynamic more complex than the one that exists between a mother and her daughter — an emotional blend of equal parts rebelliousness and devotion, respect and regret.

Now imagine going into business together. Does the idea sound like a nightmare — or the chance of a lifetime? Can mothers and daughters really work well together? Placing two family members in business together might seem like one way to set the stage for explosive results. But in fact, when today's new generation of moms and daughters join entrepreneurial forces, both have the chance to win and make a good living.

Historically, bringing the kids into a family business usually meant grooming a son to take over, but the steady rise of women in the work force has progressively changed things. Mothers and daughters are jumping on the small business train and reaping personal, as well as financial, rewards. In an unsteady and often unpredictable economy, it's wonderful to watch a small company succeed but more so when it's kept all in the family.

These three mother-daughter teams attest to how feminine ambition and tenacity can be a profitable partnership.





Both inside and outside of the their cheery shop, Christi Sheffield (left) and Debbie Taylor (right) live their motto: "No drama, be happy."

FUNKY MEETS CLASSY

Set on the picturesque 30A, The Blue Giraffe is a charming boutique run by a mother-daughter pair that possesses a combination of feminine wisdom and Southern class. This unique shop offers a good example of exactly how a successful business should run.

Christi Sheffield, 41, and her mother, Debbie Taylor, 58, agree that the store is a success because their personalities and work habits are complementary. Born out of a mutual love of books and art, the two women bought an existing art boutique in 2010 and expanded it to include books by local authors, a wide variety of jewelry and textural art, including paintings, home décor and inspirational curios.

A particular strength of their small business is their ability to respond quickly to changing economic conditions. Taylor believes that part of their success is due to knowing their customers personally, as well as their ability to meet local and tourist desires for funky decor.

"We fell in love with this shop and wanted to keep the heart and soul of the business when we bought it," Taylor says. "We surround ourselves with 'beachy' art that is happy, feel-good and colorful," Sheffield adds. "It's a very happy place to work."

When asked about how they maintain a professional relationship

in a swirl of personal family dynamics, Taylor says, "We never argue. We had a great relationship before, but now it's even better. We even schedule time to talk business."

Clearly the division of labor is part of the key to this harmonious relationship and upbeat attitude. "Christi deals with the day-to-day business, the artists and the bookkeeping. She also handles the inventory aspect. I handle the budgeting, marketing and financial end," Taylor explains.

Both agree there is no way they could or would want to keep separate their personal and professional roles. This twosome believes that their greatest asset is the fact that they are best friends.

The Blue Giraffe currently shows the work of approximately 38 artists and designers utilizing a unique mixture of mediums. With an eye for growth, the pair hopes to break into the wedding market, offer art classes, incorporate an artist-of-the-week feature and utilize the on-line potential by offering art through their website.

"We have so much to offer, and we've only just started," Sheffield says. "Business is up 12 percent from last year, and I think we can do more retail magic," Taylor adds.

This business is an endeavor of the heart mixed with old-fashioned common business sense and class.