

free

you better be rolling out

rollingout

chicago

urban style weekly

vol. 3 number 28 august 01, 2002

amy hilliard

pounding cake into business



Amy Hilliard - Founder, President, & CEO

When Amy Hilliard tells most people about her business, The ComfortCake Company, LLC, "cute" is usually the first word to describe her venture. That is until she mentions that her first customer was United Airlines.

"When they see me, they see a woman, and I have a cake business so they think, 'isn't that cute, you must be making them out of your kitchen.' When I tell them my first customer was United Airlines and they ordered 500,000 slices of my cake, that kind of changes their perception because there's no

way I could bake that many cakes in my kitchen," she explains with a small laugh.

A savvy businesswoman with years of experience in marketing and creating products, The ComfortCake Company was much more than a whimsical decision by someone with a great cake recipe. Instead, it's the manifestation of a lot of thought and preparation. After working for Gillette, L'Oreal, and Pillsbury and developing products for each company, Ms. Hilliard decided that her talents would be best utilized for something else—her own business.

"I've been fortunate that my experience and background is directly applicable to what I'm doing now. I'm just doing it for me," the mother of two explains.

And she has not regretted a day of the new life that she's created for herself. Even though it's hard work being a business owner, responsible for the well-being of employees, Ms. Hilliard is rewarded daily for her leap of faith.

"I look at fear as something that shouldn't stop you. You can have reservations on something, but then do your homework and the fear should go away, or at least you can manage it," she says.

She has but to look at her two children to know that she's doing the right thing. In a society where people are too often deterred from thinking outside the box, she's a living example of what tangible goals, ambition and courage can accomplish. Truly a family orientated business, Ms. Hilliard has encouraged participation from her young ones; her daughter wrote the tag line for the company (pound cake so good it feels like a hug) and her son was the primary taste tester in the beginning, if he didn't like the cake, it didn't make the cut.

"As a mother I think it's very important to show your children options. When we were coming up most people said, 'go to college and get a job.' and it wasn't 'go to college, or hone your skills to own a business," she explains with a trace of regret lacing her voice. "I want my children to know that you can get a job, but you can also own a business and hire other people, and when they see me doing that it makes them feel that they can do it too."

With an extensive, diverse client list that is only growing, Ms. Hilliard is attempting to set new standards through her company, and is one step closer to achieving her ultimate goal: "What Starbucks did for coffee, I want to do for pound cake." www.comfortcake.com

-jacinta howard

May 2005