



Photo/BRUCE STAPLEY

Uxbridge entrepreneur Cathy Christoff doesn't mind being called a basket case. She turned her back on a successful corporate career to start a small gift basket business and spend more time with her family. The response to her new venture, she says, has been positive. She is planning an open house this weekend.

Basket business brisk for former executive

By BRUCE STAPLEY

It was late this past spring when Cathy Christoff was faced with perhaps the biggest decision of her life.

The corporate purchasing manager of a large company serving the automobile industry, Cathy was spending more time aboard the corporate jet than she was with her 22-month-old daughter and her husband Mark.

Returning home from work after a meeting where she was offered even more responsibilities, she pondered her future.

"Caitlin (their daughter) called out 'Mommy' for the very first time, and I knew right then what I had to do," she said.

She resigned from her job and came home. "I just quit cold turkey," she recalls. "Mark and I both knew I had to do something, so it was either help him out in his business, or start one of my own."

Which is exactly what she did. Cathy embarked on a gift basket operation that is starting to come on stream after several months spent lining up suppliers and planning a marketing thrust.

The resulting enterprise, 'Something Neat' incorporates Cathy's lifelong interest in crafts with a desire to have a unique business she could have fun with.

Cathy's baskets range from assortments of children's crafts to romantic fireside picnic baskets. And with a second child due in June, she has been inspired to include 'new baby' baskets, along with 'new grandparent' baskets.

"The concept has caught on big with real estate agents who want to give their clients a present upon closing a real estate deal," she claims.

Cathy is staging an open house to showcase her goods and crafts

made by local artisans at her home this Friday and Saturday at 55 Centre Street in Uxbridge.

While she hopes the business develops, Cathy intends to keep it small enough to allow her not to lose the point of why she established it in the first place.

"I want to always keep in mind that the whole idea of leaving my career was so I could spend more time with my family," she said.

"I couldn't be happier!" she concludes.

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