

Custom Designs Fit for Down the Shore or Down the Aisle

Wearable Wares Are 'Funky & Fabulous'



Supplied Photos



WORK IT: Sondra Osuchowski's work station (below) is where the funk and fabulousness are born. As the artisan's tidy space suggests, good organization is a must in running a small business; she alone is responsible for everything from buying her beads and supplies to photographing examples of her work (above) to display on her web site.

Artist and entrepreneur Sondra Osuchowski never dreamed her summer job at the Just Bead It shops on Long Beach Island would evolve into her full-time career. But six years after launching her own line of original handcrafted jewelry, here she is, the self-employed, one-woman force that drives Funky & Fabulous Custom Jewelry Design.

Funky & Fabulous was something Osuchowski started on the side in April 2001, but by January 2005 the demand for her work had risen so dramatically that she could pursue it full time. Both the enterprise and the lady at its helm have been gaining momentum ever since.

Osuchowski said she feels fortunate to have had "awesome female role models" in her life, two in particular to whom she largely owes her success. Her mother, Linda Steere, an oil painter and graphic designer, cultivated and nurtured her daughter's artistic tendencies, and Just Bead It owner Stacey Fuessinger helped her to hone both her beading techniques and her business smarts. Osuchowski spent her first four years with Just Bead It as a summer staffer while a student at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey—two years as a salesperson and beading instructor, followed by another two as a store manager—then almost three more, after she graduated, as the full-time head manager at Just Bead It's Stone Harbor location.

Today Osuchowski sells her one-of-a-kind necklaces, bracelets, earrings and other accessories in retail stores, including all three of the Island's Farias' Surf and Sport shop locations and at local glass artist Mary Tantillo's new studio, Swell Colors in Haven Beach. She also sells her wares at shows (such as the Viking Village Arts and Crafts Show in Barnegat Light this Sunday) and home parties; through a branch of the business dedicated solely to her specialty, custom bridal jewelry design; and via her web site, www.funkyandfabulous.com, which at any given time features about 200 items.

"That's my storefront," she said.

After noticing a void in the surf market, she started targeting surf shops to sell her jewelry and now associates with 10 shops all along the Jersey Shore, including the aforementioned Farias', Surfer's Supplies in Ocean City and Heritage Surf and Sport locations in Ocean City, Sea Isle City and Margate. The last, incidentally, was the site of a purchase made by Osuchowski's first



celebrity client, heiress starlet Paris Hilton, who bought a pair of Funky & Fabulous pink Swarovski crystal earrings there in 2005 while shooting an episode of "The Simple Life" in Atlantic City.

"This business is my whole life—I feel like I'm always working," Osuchowski said one recent spring morning, having slowed down long enough to dish about life in her sunlit kitchen over some hot coffee and a plate of fresh muffins. That last bit she said with a smile, though, because the truth is she couldn't be happier.

Osuchowski makes her sizable workload manageable by budgeting her time and ad-

hering to her own meticulous organizational system. Her motivation, she explained, is multifaceted. Foremost is the reward she feels every time a customer's eyes light up at the sight of her jewelry on display. Second, she wants very much to build her brand name and, along with it, a reputation as a professional female artist and businesswoman. Ultimately, "I'm trying as hard as I can not to have to get 'a job,'" she said, gesturing air-quotes.

She tried briefly to do the structured, 9-to-5 thing, but after only one job interview she was saying to herself, "This is so not for me." She found she simply could not fight the

irresistible pull to be an artist.

To that end, her methodology is a strategic juggling act that includes, in part, buying inventory, recording detailed sketches and measurements of her designs; assembling the pieces making the individual pieces, traveling to and from art and craft shows and eyeing fashion trends. (By the by: black and white pairings are huge for spring.) Even relaxing looks suspiciously like working when she is on the beach, reading up on what's happening on the runways and at the trunk shows.

Osuchowski grew up in Haddonfield, but her ties to Long Beach Island can be traced back much farther than her work experience at Just Bead It. In her childhood she spent many a summer day hanging out at her best friend Jessica's grandparents' beach house in Brant Beach, and her own grandparents lived in Tuckerton, just across the bay. She has moved around a bit, and her business is based in Sea Isle City, though for the time being she hangs her hat in Manahawkin.

She has always preferred the natural beauty of the coast, which has a strong presence in her jewelry design sensibilities.

"Everything has a natural feel," she explained, which she achieves by soaking up inspiration from her surroundings, drawing on her innate sense of color and using only high-quality, genuine and earthy materials such as wood, shell, cultured pearls and semi-precious stones, sterling silver and 14-karat gold vermeil.

The look she aims for is "simple and elegant," she said. Often, a design centers on one dramatic element, allowing it to "speak for itself," she explained.

One of the biggest challenges, she said, is the pressure to "constantly ... reinvent yourself every season," lest the buying public begin to tire of the same old thing. "You always have to top yourself," she said. Still, Osuchowski is mindful to avoid designing pieces that mimic fleeting trends. Instead, she wants her jewelry to have staying power, both literally and figuratively—i.e., durability and timeless style.

Despite the many challenges that go along with being the sole proprietor and workforce of a small business, Osuchowski finds being her own boss yields far more advantages than downsides.

Continued on Page 70, Sec. 2

Funky

Continued from Page 68, Sec. 2

"I justify (the risks) by saying, 'I'm enjoying my life,'" she reasoned.

Looking to the future, Osuchowski said she expects Funky & Fabulous to grow but intends to remain an integral part of the process no matter which direction her company takes, never wanting to compromise the small-business,

personalized feel.

She also anticipates having a family someday but is in no particular hurry. When the right time comes, she said, she is glad she will have already established something that belongs to her alone and fills her daily with pride and excitement.

"People can tell that I'm happy," she said. "How could I not be?"

—Victoria Ford
victoriaford@thesandpaper.net

Outdoor Living

Continued from Page 62, Sec. 2

electrical or gas utilities run from the house, he said.

Utility work does require permits and inspections from local land use boards, he noted.

Jurczyk marveled at the number of options available to today's consumer. Now, homeowners

can't afford the time or expense to design and build an outdoor oasis piece-by-piece can even order pre-manufactured, partially assembled all-in-one units — they're like little kitchen vignettes, Jurczyk said — that come ready for the independent appliance dealer to install.

At this rate, the next big thing in luxury backyard appointments may very well be state-of-the-art outhouses.

—Victoria Ford
victoriaford@thesandpaper.net

SUNSET • HARBOUR • REALTY

106 N. BAY AVE. • PO BOX 1389 • BEACH HAVEN
609-492-5700 • Fax: 609.492.7744 www.barrierislandproperties.com

OPEN HOUSE • OPEN HOUSE • OPEN HOUSE • OPEN HOUSE • OPEN HOUSE

<p>OPEN HOUSE Sun. 5/27 1-4pm 212 E. 15th St.</p>  <p>NORTH BEACH HAVEN \$2,995,000</p>	<p>OPEN HOUSE Sun. 5/27 1-4pm 201 Holyoke</p>  <p>SOUTH BEACH HAVEN \$2,349,000</p>	<p>OPEN HOUSE Sat. 5/26 Noon-2pm 17 Joan</p>  <p>HOLGATE \$749,000</p>	<p>OPEN HOUSE Sun. 5/27 Noon-3pm 5003 S. LB Blvd.</p>  <p>HOLGATE \$595,000</p>
<p>OPEN HOUSE Sat. 5/26 Noon-3pm 27 W. Jacquelin</p>  <p>HOLGATE \$679,000</p>	<p>OPEN HOUSE Sat. 5/27 2-4 pm 1701 West Ave.</p>  <p>L.E.H.Y.C. - BEACH HAVEN \$1,129,000</p>	<p>OPEN HOUSE New Construction</p>  <p>NORTH BEACH HAVEN \$829,000</p>	<p>OPEN HOUSE Oceanfront</p>  <p>SOUTH BEACH HAVEN \$2,250,000</p>
 <p>BEACH HAVEN GARDENS \$1,099,500 East Unit</p>	<p>Duplex</p>  <p>BEACH HAVEN \$749,000</p>	<p>Bayfront</p>  <p>BEACH HAVEN \$1,275,000</p>	<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>BRANT BEACH • LONG BEACH TWP \$2,995,000</p>
 <p>BEACH HAVEN TERRACE \$1,395,000</p>	 <p>BEACH HAVEN \$885,000</p>	<p>Just Reduced</p>  <p>BEACH HAVEN \$595,000</p>	<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>SOUTH BEACH HAVEN \$1,800,000</p>
 <p>BEACH HAVEN \$985,000</p>	<p>Bayfront</p>  <p>BEACH HAVEN \$625,000</p>	<p>Just Reduced</p>  <p>HOLGATE \$869,000</p>	<p>OCEANSIDE BRANT BEACH Vacant Land 75' X 100' \$925,000</p>
<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>SHIP BOTTOM OCEANFRONT \$2,049,000</p>	 <p>L.E.H.Y.C. - BEACH HAVEN \$849,000</p>	<p>Bayfront</p>  <p>BEACH HAVEN BAYFRONT \$849,000</p>	 <p>L.E.H.Y.C. - BEACH HAVEN \$995,000</p>
<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>SOUTH BEACH HAVEN \$1,929,000</p>	<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>SURF CITY \$1,895,000</p>	<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>S. BEACH HAVEN \$1,600,000</p>	 <p>BEACH HAVEN BOROUGH • L.E.H. Yacht \$659,000</p>
<p>Oceanfront</p>  <p>SOUTH BEACH HAVEN \$2,895,000</p>	 <p>BEACH HAVEN \$449,900</p>	 <p>S. BEACH HAVEN \$595,000</p>	 <p>BEACH HAVEN - BOROUGH \$1,649,000</p>

Hammock

Continued from Page 64, Sec. 2

of songs, including a number of originals. Early next month, he will record his aptly titled *Making My Way*, a 12-track CD that he plans to release in August.

And, as much as he likes playing alone, Hammock says most shows he'll perform with a friend.

This summer, Hammock plays with bassist Terry Stebbons at The Sea Shell on Friday from 4 to 7 p.m., Terrace Tavern Friday 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. and Daddy O Restaurant Sunday 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Solo gigs at The Gateway 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Sunday, Buckalew's Thursday 9 p.m. to 12 a.m., Engleside Motel and Restaurant Monday 4 to 7 p.m., and Surf City Hotel Monday 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. He also has a bi-weekly show every other Saturday night from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at Calloway's.

"I'm really excited about playing all these places," Hammock says. "Hopefully people will see how hard I'm working and respect that."

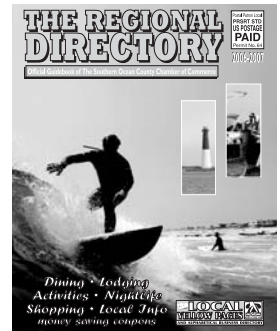
Looking forward, he could foresee a potential tour this fall.

But first thing's first. For now there's the summer of '07 before him, an endless expanse of shows, every one of which Hammock says he is proud to hold down.

"This is finally my year," he beamed.
—Dan Schwartzman
danschwartzman@thesandpaper.net

YOU'LL NEVER USE YOUR REGIONAL DIRECTORY AS A BOOSTER SEAT

But to find all local businesses faster, use your Regional Directory first. It's about one-tenth as bulky as the "big yellow pages" and about ten times easier to use.



The Regional Directory is your complete guide to every local business. Every store, every service, every restaurant from Barnegat to Tuckerton and Barnegat Light to Holgate is listed. You won't waste time searching through 732 and 908 area codes to find a nearby business you want.



published by
Jersey Shore News Magazines,
609-494-5900