

Saint by Sarah Jane A Creative Family Business



Photo courtesy of Brandon Sullivan, Sullivan Photography

When Sarah Jane Bourque talks about her family, she uses words like support and creativity and lucky. This impressive jewelry designer attributes her success to her roots and the strength of her family.

“Our mother, Lucy Lies, used to design jewelry when we were little,” says Sarah Jane. “She sold her jewelry at Saks and Barneys. That’s where my creativity came from. We always connected through doing artistic things.” Her mother still serves as a creative consultant for Saint by Sarah Jane.

When Sarah Jane and her sister, Ashley, were young, they would take turns plying their talents in the family home. “I always wanted to be a fashion designer,” says Sarah Jane. “I looked through all the magazines and loved putting things together.” She had notebooks with her favorite looks cut from those magazines.

“Sarah Jane was great with accessories,” Ashley says. “She’d put outfits together for my mom and me.”

When it was Ashley’s turn to create, she gravitated towards interior decorating. “She’d move things around in the room to bring about a whole new feel or effect,” says Sarah Jane.

After college, Sarah Jane moved to New York and went to work as an assistant designer of handbags for Barry Kieselstein-Cord. She worked for him for four years, traveling to Paris, Florence and Milan. “It was a great opportunity,” Sarah Jane says. But she dreamed of having her own brand and design. “I didn’t want to live in New York forever; I wanted to be closer to home [Wichita],” she says. It was her father who suggested she design jewelry. “I really liked the idea,” she says. “I started researching and thinking about what I wanted to do, what would be fun, and what would sell.”

In 1997 she started Saint by Sarah Jane. “I really enjoy the design part - it’s so much fun for me. I also get a charge out of the response I get from customers. I get a lot of inspiration from them.” Sarah Jane never knows what will inspire a new idea, whether it’s a ladybug or the texture and color of a piece of fabric or stone. Through nature walks in the Sonoran desert she often finds her muse, but memory and experience always come into play in an artist’s realm.

For example, the cane pattern of her grandmother’s chairs inspired the Julep Heart collection. “Overall we’ve been able to create a company where the designs are fun, very now, and yet classic and timeless,” says Sarah Jane. Fashion plays a large part in the design



of the product, so they stay abreast of current trends.



After attending Arizona State University, Ashley pursued a career in real estate, then five years ago the family asked for her help. “It was an awesome opportunity that made sense, so I went to work for Saint,” Ashley says. “I admire my sister for her work and I love being a part of the process.”

Ashley handles the public relations side of the business. “I’m a natural promoter and I love to promote the brand,” Ashley says. “I’ve traveled to our stores to hold events, do trunk shows, and corporate meetings with Neiman-Marcus. And I work one-on-one with the Plaid Giraffe, the exclusive retailer for Saint by Sarah Jane in Wichita. They co-sponsor events with us to promote and grow the jewelry line.”

Lance Biel, Ashley’s husband, oversees the financial side of the business, and their father handles operations. “It’s nice to have the trust and support of family in the good and tough times,” says Sarah Jane. “I feel really lucky that my sister and I can do this together. She does a dynamic job and is very passionate about the business. Ashley really has a gift for sales.”

With a toddler and a new baby at home, Sarah Jane finds that creativity is a great outlet. “But the most rewarding part about what I do is when a customer comes in wearing something by Saint that they love and they tell me why they love it,” Sarah Jane says. She admits that she, too, has a collection of Saint pieces that she has purchased over the years.

“The most important thing I ever learned was that if you want something out of life, you have to earn it,” Ashley says. Recently, Saint by Sarah Jane did just that by winning the prestigious “Rising Star” award from one of the largest jewelry trade shows in the world, JCK Las Vegas. This award is given to the company that has something fresh, artistic, and innovative to offer.

To see examples of this exclusive hand-crafted jewelry, visit the Plaid Giraffe or the corporate web site at www.saintbysarahjane.com.

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