

Women's Business Center Annual Luncheon
A Celebration of NH Women Business Owners
"WomenBiz in 3-D"
Monday, 25 September 2006
at the CR Sparks Center, Bedford, NH



Pug At The Beach

WBC Speech

I'm Diana Taylor and I'm Pug At The Beach. Before I tell you about why I went into business for myself, let me tell you a little about Pug At The Beach – who he is and what we - at Pug Headquarters - do.

It all started one winter in Key West. A dog was created. A story followed. It's about the beach and the things we learn when we're at the ocean.

Pug At The Beach is NOT about a breed, it's about a lifestyle. It's part Jimmy Buffett, part Thich Nat Hahn (the Buddhist monk). Pug is synonymous with embracing the adventure of life, playing with a passion, learning as much as we can in life, and finding joy in everything we do.

Pug At The Beach was born of the need to play. I had been writing personal essays and, admittedly, had gotten a little too wordy for my own liking. I went to my local bookstore for guidance. The writing exercise books I found there were expensive and didn't offer much that I couldn't do for myself. So, I went home, took the drawing of a little dog I'd created in Key West and decided to write a story based on that original illustration.

I thought, hmmm, let's see, how about I write 100 words about this little dog I had named Pug. And to make it even more interesting, let me write those 100 words in 3 sentences – grammatically correct and easily read sentences.

Those first "adventures" as I like to call them, were choppy and rudimentary, but I kept "playing" with them, and eventually they got better as did I. There were more illustrations and more accompanying stories all following the same format 100 words in 3 sentences and all carried with them a nugget of truth, of ordinary everyday wisdom.

Pug At The Beach is about silver linings, about seeing the good in everything including the adversity in life which makes us want to throw up our hands and just give up. It's about embracing the challenges of life.

One day I was on this beach – and most of my really good stories start out with the words, "I was on this beach" when it occurred to me that I needed to change my life.

I was 45 years old and starting over. It was my choice and I was happy for the approaching bend in the road. But I had one small problem. After staying home with kids for 15 years, my marketable skills were no longer valued by the current workplace. I had a BA, a double major and a job offer that paid minimum wage.

One day I was fretting about how I was going to feed myself when my big kid said to me,

“Mom, you like to write. You’re good at it. People get motivated to do good things with their lives after they read your stories.

Why don’t you take all the Pug adventures that are set on the beach, put them into a book, and throw it out there to see who bites. If it takes off, you know you’re on to something. If not, we’ll figure something else out.”

And so I did. After a lot of homework and endless phone calls, I set up my own publishing house, A1A Press, Pug’s umbrella organization, and began the process of publishing my first title in the series: *Pug At The Beach, An island dog’s reflections on life*.

And then it occurred to me, the character driven entity that is Pug At The Beach really lends itself well to merchandising. I didn’t need to limit this endeavor to just books. So I expanded into apparel, *Pug Apparel, For when comfort is just as important as the adventure*. I chose clothing that I myself like to wear on the beach: soft denim shirts, upscale sweatshirts and hats whose colors suggested summer.

Merchandise ideas came at a fast and furious pace: Pug Greeting Cards, Pug Wisdom Cards and Pug custom tees sporting images of Pug surfing, bowling, fly fishing and cooking to name a few.

The Pug book was a good thing. Pug Apparel was good, too. And the merchandise was good. But I wanted to do more. This was a work that touched lives, certainly, but I wanted a different direction.

I got to thinking about my life before Pug, when I was seriously ill and given only 6 months to live. “Put your affairs in order,” they said. “Prepare yourself.” And I did, I prepared myself and my children for my death. The support I received during that dark time was overwhelming. I was moved. And it’s not something I’ll ever forget. It’s inspired me to give back in a way that enables me to reach beyond my small circle. Last year I set up a couple of charitable endeavors: Pug On Top and Pug In The Classroom. Right now, they are a small but important part of Pug Headquarters.

Through Pug On Top we give Pug At The Beach hats to people facing serious illness. David’s House in Lebanon and The Kingsbury Cancer Center in Keene are two of the participating organizations. At Pug Headquarters we believe that everyone should feel good about themselves regardless of their life conditions or circumstances. A hat isn’t much but it’s something and sometimes all you need is a little something to help keep you going.

Because writing is such joy to me, because I find play in my work, I felt it was important to share that joy with others. Through Pug In The Classroom we give Pug At The Beach books to classrooms and libraries to foster the love of writing in students of all ages. At Pug Headquarters we feel no voice should ever go unheard.

The possibilities are endless. That’s what I tell people when they offer different avenues Pug could or should travel whether it’s advice for merchandising or future book themes. The possibilities are endless.

That day, almost 4 years ago now, when I was given 6 months to live, I felt a profound sense of loss of a great many things but especially at never having fallen in love. Here I was going to die and I’d never fallen in love, never experienced that joy.

But then I realized that I had indeed fallen in love, not with a man, but with a body of work. I love my work. That's what makes me do what I do for as long as I do because I love it and I know it's doing good. I love my work. Finally, I have a job I love, a job I'm good at, and a job that does good.

That feeling behind the defining moment that made me want to go into business for myself may be a bit blurred now, but that doesn't really matter. What matters is that I've been called to do this work. I believe that wholly and fully. The work that I do at Pug At The Beach is not just about or for me, it's about what I give back and how it's been received. It's not only a gift to me but my gift to the world. And I'm happy to still be here to extend that gift.

I'll be 50 years old in a couple of months. And I'm loving that, too! I'm happy. I'm doing mindful and joyful work. I'm happy. And there's no stopping me now.

And in case you're wondering, yes, I am indeed well and healthy and enjoying every day as if it were my last. Because you just never know, it could very well be.

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Diana Taylor
Top Dog
Pug At The Beach

Transforming lives through harmonious living and well being.

At Pug At The Beach we believe EVERY day should be a day at the beach.

We also believe:
Sometimes all you need in life is the wisdom of a good dog.™
That's Pug At The Beach