



BABY BLING

Momma's Jewels creates trinkets that infants – and moms – drool over

By Casey Lovegrove | contributor

STACY ROSENTHAL, NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF MOTHERHOOD INSPIRED THE IDEA OF CHIC, FUNCTIONAL JEWELRY THAT CAN STAND UP TO THE HANDLING OF A TEETHING BABY OR TODDLER. IN 2007, ROSENTHAL LAUNCHED MOMMA'S JEWELS IN CONNECTICUT, AND THE COMPANY QUICKLY EXPANDED.

Beth Sturm bought the company in July 2013, and when Sturm moved to Greenville she brought the company headquarters with her, attracted by the Upstate's favorable economic climate for small businesses. Momma's Jewels pieces are sold in six Upstate locations in Greenville, Spartanburg and Greenwood, and continue to appear in stores nationwide.

Sturm shared with UBJ her enthusiasm for the product and the possibilities of plugging Momma's Jewels into the Greenville business community.

How did the idea for Momma's Jewels originate?

The idea came to Stacy [Rosenthal] in 2006 when she was pregnant with her second child, and just had the same struggles that every mom has, where she couldn't wear jewelry and she always felt that she was a mess. She had picked up her toddler's teething ring off the floor so many times; she thought 'there has to be a better way.' So she came up with the idea of doing a teething ring on a necklace.

What was the thought process behind the product design?

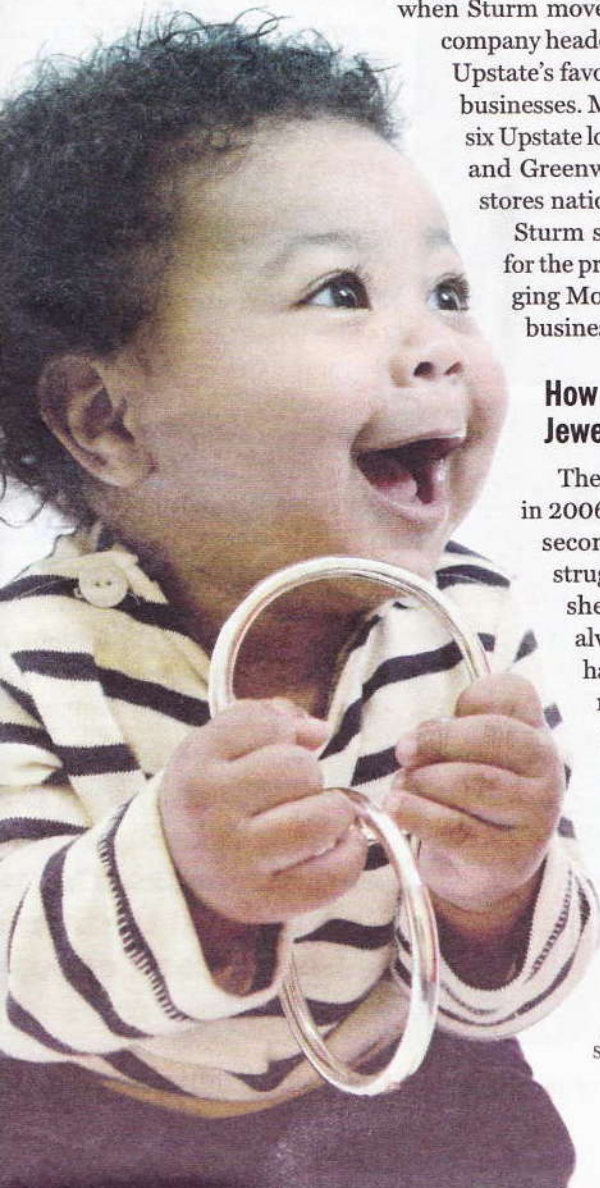
After a few designs of doing the silicone and the rubber route, which

Stacy felt weren't that glamorous, she had the realization that sterling silver is antibacterial, has been used for generations in cups, rattles and spoons, and is also a perfect metal for jewelry. Sterling silver is naturally antibacterial and antimicrobial. It's also cool to the touch and hard, almost like a teething ring you'd put in the freezer.

It's very functional, so a lot of thought went into the length of the chain, and the fact that the chain loops around the ring allows more mobility. There's a rattle in the pieces, and we found babies gravitate more towards those with the rattle than without. We also learned that we can engrave the top of the ring, and we do that here in Greenville.

What safety testing does the product undergo?

The product is completely ASTM-regulated and has passed all safety testing required by them and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Safety is our No. 1 priority. It's a very long process for us to develop new styles and make sure it is functional and beautiful at the same time. We're very proud of the fact that we have a product that not only makes the mom feel beautiful, but also feel at ease knowing that it is a safe product for her child.



Do you market the product only to mothers of young children?

You would never know what it is; that's the beauty of it. Moms can continue to wear it after the children are grown, and especially if it's engraved, it can be a keepsake. When you're having a baby, everything is for the baby. Very few things are given to the mother specifically, and this is something for the mom that can make her feel special and beautiful that also strengthens the bond with the baby.

What we've found is the majority of our actual purchasers are not expectant mothers but the husband, grandmother, sister or best friend buying it as a gift. Very rarely are we finding that it's something a mom has bought for herself. It's usually a shower or holiday gift.

How is the company structured?

The products are actually made in Massachusetts — there's still an old silver industry and jewelry craftsmanship world up there. We have them shipped down here, and we ship everything from Greenville.

Stacy is still involved part-time in Connecticut and still does product development and works very closely with me as we're designing new pieces. Here in Greenville, it's myself and one employee. Her main focus is our e-commerce website and the press and marketing, while I work on the day-to-day stuff.

Since moving to Greenville, how are you growing the company?

When Stacy started the company, it was by word of mouth and walking into stores in her neighborhood, and it started to grow organically, mostly in Connecticut. We're now growing within the Southeast and all along the Eastern Seaboard. We're doing a little bit more of a push to get into stores. We are in a showroom in Atlanta, and we have two independent sales reps. We're traveling to different cities every week to get in the door and doing trade shows. We're only in 115 stores, so there are endless

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Beth Sturm, president of Momma's Jewels.



possibilities to get into more retailers. The West Coast is our next big push.

We have in development right now three other necklaces, and we just launched the triangle design in early May. It's been five pieces for seven years, so the fact that we're now hopefully going to double our line is very exciting. In addition to the teething necklaces, we are looking to get into silver giftables as well. We're hoping to produce some of those here, and we've talked to some people in the Upstate we might be able to work with. The jewelry itself will never be a huge product line because of the safety factor.

Looking forward, what are you most excited about?

I'm most excited about the growth, honestly. This is such a wonderful product, but very few people know about it. We are still very small and have a very limited marketing budget as most young companies do, so we're trying to be creative and do it grass roots. We want to become more of a household name and the go-to baby shower gift. My dream would be for someone to see someone wearing it and recognize it immediately as a Momma's Jewels piece.



WHERE TO FIND IT

Find Momma's Jewels at these Upstate retailers:

DIANA CLASSIC CHILDREN
21 Augusta St., Greenville

HALE'S JEWELERS
532 Haywood Rd., Greenville

JULIE'S JEWELS & GIFTS
301 Haywood Rd., Greenville

THE FRILLY FROG
225 Main St., Greenwood

HAUTE MAMA
154 E. Main St., Spartanburg

RUFUS D. LEWIS
139 Fernwood Dr., Spartanburg

Or online at
MOMMASJEWELS.COM