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Business blooming for floral pin creator

May 9, 2008 [Recommend](#)

We welcome spring daffodils and crocuses after a long, hard winter, but the floral harvest designed by Ruthie Maddock offers beauty year-round.

Some of her newest blooms, in fact, belong to top Academy Award honorees.

In Ruthie's Garden, Maddock's Glen Ellyn home-based business, she produces original pieces of art made from classic silk flowers centered with vintage jewels.

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Glen Ellyn resident Ruthie Maddock creates one-of-a-kind floral pins for her home-based business, Ruthie's Garden. Courtesy of Ruthie Maddock

"Every single flower is one of a kind because the center is always different," said Maddock, 42. "I would never make two of a kind."

Maddock buys posies anywhere she finds some she likes. Then her real work - recreating the flowers - begins. She takes each flower apart and glues the petals together, one by one, to ensure a symmetrical design.

Next she peruses trays and trays of jewelry, separated by color, to find just the right piece for each flower. "It could take a really long time or be quick," she said. "That's the art, I think."

Although Maddock searches antique stores to find most of the jewelry, she explained, "I call it vintage instead of antique because I don't want to mislead anyone."

She favors certain stones, she said, such as aurora borealis, colored crystal, pearls and jet-black.

"But then I'll find, say, wood," she said. "I'll say, 'This one is my favorite,' but the next week, I'll have a different one."

The brooches range in size from 2 to 6 inches, come in virtually every hue and cost \$28 to \$42. Each has a pin and a clip so it won't damage fabrics.

New blossoms in this artist's bouquet are three kinds of shoe clips: flowers with jewels, ribbons with jewels or simply ribbons.

Although Maddock didn't set out to turn the floral pins into a business, art was always important.

As Ruth McCausland, she grew up as one of five siblings in Wheaton. After graduating from the former Wheaton Central High School, she played soccer and earned an art degree from Eastern Illinois University, selling watercolors to help with tuition.

She worked as a graphic artist and met her husband, Mike, who invents, brands and markets new products and is a founding partner of Maddock Douglas Inc. in Elmhurst. She became a stay-at-home mom after their older son, Gunnar, now 9, was born.

Soon after son Cody, now 5, joined the family, Maddock visited an art fair booth where handmade floral purses were sold. "The area was decorated with flowers, and I loved them," she recalled. "I thought, 'What could I do with them?'"

What she did was start making the pins for herself, using costume jewelry from her late grandmother. Next came brooches for family members and friends.

But when strangers began stopping Maddock to ask where she bought her pins, she knew they'd sell. "Then I felt like I needed a home for them," she said

The first home she found was at Good Works Gallery in Glen Ellyn, which has sold Maddock's creations since 2004. Samples of Ruthie's Garden now also grace the landscapes at Impressions in Wheaton, Baubles & More in Downers Grove and other boutiques throughout the Chicago area.

To reach Maddock, call 630-776-2032. Examples may also be seen at www.ruthiesgarden.com.

Last fall Maddock showed her pins at a Northbrook event, where her booth was next to one selling short swing capes. She held one her brooches up to the fleece capes as she considered which color to buy.

Soon the cape designers ordered pins to enhance the capes, and then ordered more and more. After one order shortly before the Academy Awards, they told Maddock, "They're going into the nominees' gift bags!"

Ruthie's Garden touches more than artistic urges in its owner, however; it's become a way of helping others, a priority in the Maddock family.

Maddock, for example, leads the senior high youth group at Parkview Community Church, coaches her older son's fourth-grade soccer team and edits the Diamante Montessori newsletter. The entire family will travel to Mexico in mid-May to spend a week helping a family build a home through Homes of Hope, an organization similar to Habitat for Humanity.

Also, Maddock donates at least 30 percent of her profits, primarily to World Vision but to other local causes as well. Her eyes fill with tears as she recalls a television special on Rwanda, a program that led to her decision to aid World Vision.

"(Ruthie's Garden) is a creative, fun outlet, but there's a mission, there's a purpose," Maddock said. "I'm like a stay-at-home mom, but I can still do something."

Sandy Stevens has lived in Glen Ellyn since 1984. Contact her at ssmamabear@aol.com or c/o The Sun, 1500 W. Ogden Ave., Naperville, IL 60540.

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