

by *Billie Jo Youmans*



Trades of Hope - An Entrepreneurial Inspiration

Passion. Promise. Purpose. Powerful words we long to see wisely woven into our lives and the lives of our children. Holly Wehde, a home school mother of five, launched a plan to facilitate such a weaving. Personal crises in health and business drove Holly to live for a deeper purpose than personal dreams and success. She concluded that the 'only dream worth living is one God has for us.' Mulling these deep convictions over with her friend, Gretchen Huijsksens, unveiled a related, shared desire for these mothers: a passion to instill in their children that the best thing in life was to know God could use you in the lives of others.

" (We) wanted to teach our daughters that at any age we can be world-changers," says Holly.

As the women talked, they discussed those in our world who never have had the luxury of dreaming such dreams for themselves or their children. Simple survival consumes the days of the majority of the world's population. These passions and desires birthed a commercial enterprise that weaves these lofty purposes into their lives and others. Trades of Hope, the enterprise founded by Wehde, Huijsksens and their teenage daughters, is fundamentally designed to help women climb out of poverty. Its potential is exponentially greater extending to education, economics and eternal purposes!

Changing Lives

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Marrying the concepts of home parties (think Party Lite or Pampered Chef) and handcrafted items, Trades of Hope provides possibilities previously undreamed. Compassion Entrepreneurs, home party representatives, bring the economic realities of our sisters in third world countries into the homes of America as they share artisan stories. The products sold by Trades of Hope are purchased under the concept of 'Fair trade.' Fair trade guarantees a living wage to artisans and provides a quality, reasonably-priced handcrafted item to a purchaser. Among other positive goals, fair trade organizations commit to improving communities through sustainable employment endeavors. Portions of every home party sale assist in a third-world business enterprise for a woman in need!

Despite the prevalence of economic woes in America, worldwide economic realities unveil much more dire concerns for average citizens: basic survival. Twenty percent of the world population survives on \$1.00 per day; forty percent of all women in the world have less than \$2.00 per day to meet the needs of their families. The women living those realities have little opportunity to dream dreams for themselves or their children. Mal-nourishment, child labor, sexual slavery and shanty settlements dominate the lives of many. Clean water, shelter and education are dreams beyond their expectations. Trades of Hope seeks to change that reality--and meet spiritual, emotional and financial needs in the lives of American women.

The concept of 'parties with a purpose' is brought to life through the real stories of lives transformed. As Americans, we easily fall prey to discontent--forgetting that we are among the wealthiest people in the world. Our mortgage payments, health insurance costs and property taxes weigh on our minds. Envy slithers into our hearts as someone always has a newer tech device or a more luxurious car. Such shallow, self-focused perspectives are broadened by Myrta, a single mom in Haiti struggling to feed a family of six; Marta an African widow and Shova, an abandoned wife and bereaved mother in Bangladesh. These artisans and others provide the products sold by Trades of Hope. Their lives, their families' lives and even their communities are improved through the opportunities presented by Trades of Hope.

Equally inspiring are the stories of heart-stirring thankfulness that is released as Americans embrace and act to change the realities of their beleaguered sisters. Consider the words of co-founder Chelsie Wehde after returning from a Haitian buying trip.

"How can I wish I was financially more well off when tonight someone is starving to death? be looking for your greater purposea purpose where you consider others more important than yourself."

Trades of Hope allows everyone to take a step toward Chelsie's challenge. The simple act of buying a product allows one to impact the lives of others! Hosting a party brings hope and inspiration to one's friends as well as touching lives around the world. Becoming a Compassion Entrepreneur offers an income possibility that is built upon changing lives. Local representative, Samantha Kubik, shares, "I saw great depths of poverty when I lived in Egypt and believe we need to help those in such situations. Helping people climb out of poverty is better than giving handouts; it gives individuals hope and self-worth. Trades of Hope helps me meet my responsibilities to my family and my world."

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Throughout American history, great enterprises were developed to meet a need greater than greed. Trades of Hope harkens back to that noble tradition. The founders have truly developed a business which meets their goals and feeds souls.

For more information on the work of Trades of Hope, visit their website at www.tradesofhope.com.

Billie Jo has been married to her husband, Craig, for 20 years, and they have two teenage children, Rusty and Riesa. Homemaking, including homeschooling, has been her primary ministry for the past 13 years. Visit her blog at www.ramblingsfrombilliejo.blogspot.com

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