

SUMMER 2011

Missouri State

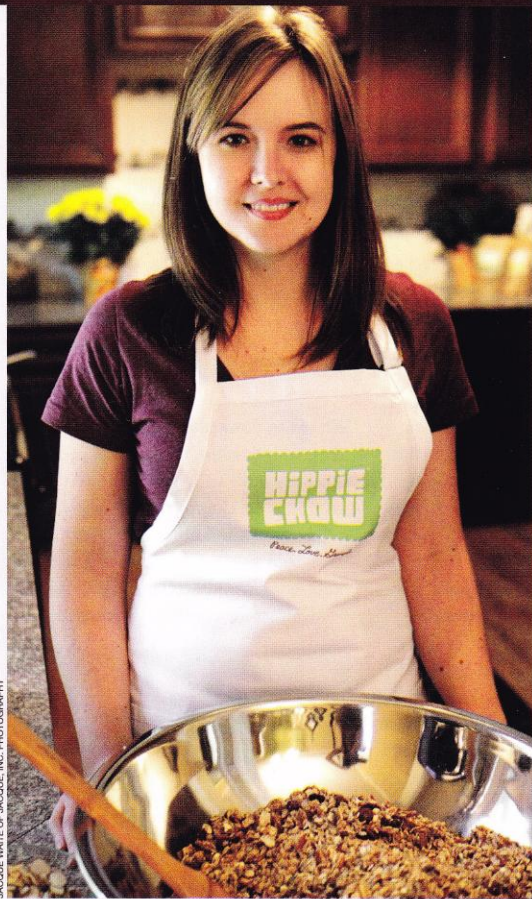
THE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED FOR THE ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY ■ VOL. 6 ■ ISSUE 2

BEARS who mean **BUSINESS!**

Get useful tips — everything from how to start a company to how to tip during a hotel stay — from alumni entrepreneurs, managers, manufacturers and more.

PLUS:

- Spotlight stories on other alumni business leaders
- Meet Paul Lusk, the new men's head basketball coach
- Essay on University's response to deadly Joplin tornado



JACQUE WATTE OF JACQUE, INC. PHOTOGRAPHY

Epicurean entrepreneur:

Valerie Jennings

LIVES IN: Lenexa, Kan.

BUSINESS: Hippie Chow gourmet granola

EDUCATION: Bachelor's in finance with minor in economics, 2003, Missouri State; master's in business administration, 2010, Rockhurst University

About halfway through that summer I was put into contact with a manager from Dean & DeLuca. That September they put it in all six of their U.S. retail stores and on their website. That was a real catalyst for growth. Hippie Chow is now in about 30 stores, most of which are in the Kansas City area.

So you're one of those people

who defy the cliché "don't quit your day job"?

Yes! I had a full-time job working with defaults on commercial mortgages until the end of 2010. I have been doing Hippie Chow full-time since January and now make it in a space I rent in a commercial kitchen.

What is the future of your company?

Everything is handmade, and that is the plan for the indefinite future — I don't want to grow if I can't do it right. Right now I am the only employee, but I am on the cusp of getting other people involved.

What were you like at Missouri State — were you a business dynamo?

I was kind of a nerdy college student! I lived in honors housing for the first two years and have fond memories of

my roommates. My studies all instilled in me a work ethic. I like and expect to work hard and expect my job to give me a sense of satisfaction. I want to create something that's greater than me. ■

ADVICE FROM VALERIE:

How to start a small business

"I loved the idea of being an entrepreneur, but I was so scared to take what I thought was a huge risk that I almost talked myself out of it! So I say, don't be afraid to make changes to get what you need out of life," Valerie said. "From a practical standpoint, be sure to make a business plan. And there are lots of resources, many available at no charge, for entrepreneurs."

Some examples:

- The U.S. Small Business Administration is a good place to start: www.sba.gov
- Look for a small business development center in your city — they have huge networks of contacts.

Small business resources at Missouri State University

Missouri State is in the process of opening The Robert W. Plaster Center for Free Enterprise and Business Development, which will provide a one-stop shop for new small businesses by giving guidance and assisting with start-up activities. Learn more: www.missouristate.edu/ideacommons/plastercenter.htm

Tell us the story of Hippie Chow.

I love to cook; I like to know where my food comes from and how it is produced. I started making granola for my boyfriend because he had been buying that highly processed stuff at the store. I started toying with the idea of selling my granola as a "hobby" business. The tipping point was when I came up with the name, which is a play on "Puppy Chow" and the tie between the terms "hippie" and "granola." The name was my one flash of creativity in my whole life! I went online and found no one else using it. I thought, "OK, now I have to take it a step further."

You started small and have expanded rapidly into some major stores.

I first started selling Hippie Chow in May 2010 from a booth at Overland Park Farmers Market in Kansas City.