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SMART IDEAS PASSION STATEMENT

WHAT: Logo charms that raise money and awareness for charities

WHO: Kay McDonald of Charity Charms LLC

WHERE: Phoenix

WHEN: Started in 2004

STARTUP COSTS: \$150,000

Kay McDonald, a veteran of the fashion and jewelry industry, created her ideal business when she blended her love of accessories with a lifelong passion for charitable work.

After noticing the renaissance of charm bracelets in her professional work as well as the growing trend of cause marketing from her involvement with charities, McDonald came up with the concept of a charm created from a charity's logo, custom-made with a clip-on clasp.

"One day, as I looked down at dozens of charity brochures, I had that 'aha' moment," recalls McDonald, 50. "Most charities had an adorable icon as part of their logo, which could be extracted and made into a charm. Thus, Charity Charms was born."

Today, the company has partnered with more than 50 organizations, including the American Red Cross and Childhelp USA, helping raise more than \$650,000 in the past three years. The charms retail for \$50, and prices

Personal touch: Kay McDonald's charms are crafted from charities' logos, giving them extra appeal.

PHOTO: IRON NEWELL

range from \$10 to \$230 for the jewelry they can be attached to—which includes bracelets, necklaces, earrings and pendants in a variety of styles and designs. Organizations can sell the charms and jewelry at their events and keep 100 percent of the profits or they can sell them through Charity Charms' site (charitycharms.com) for a fractional profit, which is calculated on the site so people know the exact dollar amount they are donating with their purchase.

In the future, McDonald hopes to see the company either partner with or sell to a large jewelry company that can expand the charms concept on a global scale, allowing every charity to get onboard.

"We receive wonderful stories daily from people who have given and received our products," says McDonald, who projects 2008 sales of \$1.5 million. "It's amazing to hear about the impact our products have and the impact of wearing something that reinforces a cause or passion, especially when proceeds from the purchase have helped as well."

—CELESTE HOANG

CLEANING UP

WHAT: A start-to-finish garage sale service

WHO: Ben Weissenstein of Grand Slam Garage Sales LLC

WHERE: Houston

WHEN: Started in 2006

STARTUP COSTS: \$1,000

When his high school peers were just getting their driver's licenses, Ben Weissenstein was already taking a swing at the business world. An entrepreneur since his first childhood lemonade stand, Weissenstein started his current business after helping his mom with a garage sale. "She said, 'You could make money by helping people out. A lot of people need this service.' I took that to heart and ran with it," he says.

So Weissenstein founded Grand Slam Garage Sales, a business that reduces the hassle that comes with running a garage sale. Grand Slam's staff of local high school stu-

dents covers all the bases for the customer whether it's advertising and setting up for the sale or verbally pricing all the items to ensure the customer makes a solid profit. After the sale, any unsold items are taken to Goodwill, and the customer is given a donation receipt. At an average cost of \$450 per sale, Grand Slam guarantees a \$50 profit for the customer, although Weissenstein says most customers earn about \$300.

Despite Weissenstein's youth—he's now 18—Grand Slam has been boosted by positive feedback from more than 90 jobs, as well as local press coverage. Once the company gets an investor, Weissenstein plans to expand to other locations across the country within a year. Potential franchisees in San Diego and Dallas have already expressed interest in Grand Slam, which expects sales of more than \$80,000 this year. "[Customers are] coming away with some money, they don't do anything and they get rid of all their extra stuff," says Weissenstein. "It really helps them out, and they seem to be very appreciative."

—KEVIN MANAHAN

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