

When life hands you lemons....

It was the summer of 2003. Adam, my boyfriend, was building a track to practice racing his snowmobile on. He recently started competing in snow-cross and wanted to improve his edge. I was finishing up my last year at our local college, Lakeland, when I had received a phone call that Adam was badly burned and we needed to head to Milwaukee Burn unit at St Mary's Hospital.

So many years have passed since that warm summer day, but I remember feeling like I wanted to try to help, in any way I could. There wasn't much I could do. Adam was in a drug-induced coma for the first two weeks. His therapist, Eileen, had given me a recipe for lip balm. She said most store-bought lip balm was a gimmick; she wanted Adam to use something that would help heal, not just lubricate. I finally had something I could do to help Adam. I went home to get started on the lip balms right away. To my shock, the recipe yielded about 3 quart jars of lip balm...more than any one person could use. Lol.



I didn't want the lip balm to go to waste, so I thought I might be able to fill a few tubes and give them away to my friends and family. Immediately everyone was asking for more. From there, I began researching different oils that would help Adam heal with minimal scarring. He couldn't use any lotion that contained alcohol, and back in 2003 it was almost in everything available commercially. I decided to start making my own batches of lotion for Adam, un-fragranced and with quality ingredients.

Adam went on to heal very well and was set to race out at the X-games in Colorado when he tragically died in a car accident on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The name Olivü sounds like "I love you", and 426 was Adam's snowmobile number...a tribute to Adam that I feel has brought Olivü luck, thus, Olivü 426 was born.

Having graduated with a degree in business, I was taught how to work for someone else, but now I needed to learn how to begin my own business. I enrolled in a Entrepreneurship Certification program in Dallas, TX. While I was there, a professor gave me an idea. He said if I wanted to start a business, it would be best to start with home parties. This way, any mistakes would be low budget mistakes instead of expensive ones. This was a turning point because it made the step to opening a business a lot easier. After many months of successful home parties (and a lot of learning from mistakes) I decided it was time to find a permanent home for Olivü 426. Fate would bring me to N 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Downtown



Sheboygan, WI. Starting wasn't easy. I remember grabbing a mom and daughter off the street as they were walking by and asking them to come into the shop. I had just opened that day and I was waiting for customers to come in. This was before the advent of this thing called Facebook. Years later the mom and daughter duo came back into the shop from out of town and reminded me of this story. It makes me laugh. It's important to remember our humble beginnings.

Looking back I never intended to start a business; I just wanted to be able to offer Adam the best products for healing. Today, it's that same philosophy that drives Olivü 426 and our business model. We now ship hand-made, natural products all over the country and all over the world...including Award shows such as the Golden Globes and the Oscars. We have grown into a half-million dollar a year operation by giving to our customers the same quality of product that I originally sought out for Adam. Our customers feel great knowing they are purchasing products for their friends,



family and themselves that are made with the freshest ingredients and are healing. Our products are still hand-made in small batches from our staff of 10 at our retail and production facility located at 502 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Sheboygan, WI.

We are excited to enter the Acuity Small Business Origin Stories Contest because it shows that life is filled with many kinds of moments. Some that are happy and some that are really not. The important part is that we continue to help one another, support one another and appreciate all the moments we are given that are good. Thank you for your consideration in this contest, we hope we can help inspire others to pursue their dreams as well.



*Caitlin & her daughter Charlei,  
the next generation.*

Thank you for taking the time to read my business start up story and for its consideration in this contest. I know there will be a lot of great stories submitted and I'm happy to be included among them.

XOXO,

Caitlin Brotz-McNitt





In memory of  
Adam "Skeeter" Muesegades.  
#426