

Making the Bacon (When You Can't Bring It Home)  
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Word Divas

Making budget-ends meet is a financial stress that affects thousands of Atascadero's households. With businesses closing, others cutting staff hours, and CA statewide unemployment levels ranking the fifth highest in the nation, bringing in extra income is essential to many families' ability to stay living here—even if the extra cash just pays for diapers, daycare expenses, or utility bills.

Two local women volunteered to share their work-from-home success stories with the Word DIVAS. Each has developed a business that brings in some extra bacon for their families with minimal overhead expense.

Sarah Kathleen, owner of Sarah Kathleen Photography, began her photography business just two years ago at the ripe old age of nineteen. "I worked part time at Players Restaurant and shot weddings on the weekends. I started out taking whatever photographic opportunities I had," says Sarah. "For the first year and a half, I poured every penny I made taking pictures back into buying cameras and equipment--all the while waiting tables to pay our bills." With an office at home, and a "comfy chair in front of a massive computer screen," Sarah was able to quit her waitress job back in March, and is now a full time wedding photographer. "It took me about 18 months to reach that place, and it was the longest 18 months of my life," she says. But now, "I edit, do portraits, and have client meetings during the week. On the weekends, I am a wedding machine."

When asked if the economy has taken a toll on her business, Sarah responded, "The wedding business is a great place to be in our current economic climate, because people aren't going to stop getting married. Their budgets might not be what they've always dreamt them to be, but photos are one of the few things that most people don't skimp out on. Wedding vendors aren't cheap (and I've learned why over the past 2 years--it's hard work, man!), but I like to think that I'm on the more affordable side of the spectrum. Therefore, I keep booking weddings and can keep eating."

It doesn't hurt that Sarah has talent. Something that started as a teenage hobby with a low start-up price tag has taken her all over the world--some customers paying her way to other states and even Europe to do wedding shoots. "I am fueled by passion! The fact that I can capture moments and emotions that will never occur again is fascinating and oh, so much fun. Therefore, wedding photography was 189% the perfect career choice for me. People kept telling me I had 'the eye' for it, and encouraging me to just go for it."

You can see Sarah's photos, or learn more about her business, at [www.sarahkathleen.com](http://www.sarahkathleen.com).

Another Atascadero resident, Keisha Sizemore, started her full-time home business, Learning Ladder Childcare, six years ago on just \$3000 and a desire to help children grow and learn. Within the first month, she was making money, and by the second, all available openings for

childcare had been filled. “I am very blessed to still serve many of the families that I had on the day I opened, and so far the economy hasn't affected my business too much. People are always looking for daycare,” says Keisha, who has three part-time employees plus herself. “Now days, a lot of people need two income households.” When asked about the effort involved early on, Keisha responded, “It wasn't too difficult to start. I always knew I wanted to have my own childcare business, and the timing just worked out. I was a preschool teacher for many years; I have always loved working with children. When I started, my oldest son was 18 months old.”

As far as the future of her business goes? Keisha says someday she would like to open a preschool center, but knows that will be a lot more challenging. For now, “I don't think there is anything I would do differently at this point. I am very proud of what I have accomplished and the reputation that my business has.” For more information on Learning Ladder Childcare, call 466-2079, or contact the Local Resources and Referral Agency CAP at 541-2272.

With a little creativity and a lot of can-do attitude, these local gals are inspiring others to find ways to stay on our beautiful Central Coast as they wait out this economic crisis. What passion can you turn into profit for your family?

*Editor's note: The above article was written by the Word Divas, made up of Mary Weber, Jeannette Morris, Susan Gaddis and Diane Ramirez with Mary Weber taking the lead on this article.*