

Women *in* Business

Monticello
Times

JAMIE IS HER NAME NUTRITION IS HER GAME

BY JEFFREY HAGE
MONTICELLO TIMES

When life gives you lemons, some people make lemonade.

Not Jamie Sieben. She makes lemon drop tea bombs.

The acclaimed college swimmer, turned soldier, is entering her 11th year helping her community become healthier and happier as the owner of a nutritional center.

In 2010 Sieben completed her deployment to Iraq and returned home to open a nutrition center in Saint Cloud. What began as one center in St. Cloud's Midtown Plaza has grown to a team of 12 centers in the central-including ownership in Monti Nutrition, her home base opened in 2019 in Monticello.

Monti Nutrition serves shakes, iced coffees, and tea bombs with healthy additives that help people maintain healthy lifestyles and work towards weight loss goals. Monti Nutrition also has a team of wellness coaches that work with Monti Nutrition customers with healthy lifestyle programs.

Sieben, an Elk River native, didn't have big career plans for her life after high school, she said.

Instead, she joined the U.S. Army National Guard and went straight from graduation to basic training.

She traded the lakes and streams of central Minnesota for the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Fort Leonard Wood where she learned the

ins and outs of becoming a soldier.

After graduating from basic training, Sieben returned home and enrolled at St. Cloud State University.

"I studied business management, human resources," Sieben said. She also joined the SCSU swim team under Monticello's Jeff Hegle, who led Sieben and the other Huskie swimmers to nationals.

After Sieben's first

semester at SCSU. She joined the ROTC, which allowed her to take military science courses alongside her regular college classes. There was a requirement that came with that program: Sieben needed to enlist as an officer in the U.S. Army upon her college graduation.

An internship with Target led to a seven-year career with the Minneapolis-based retail giant. That time

was also spent serving in the National Guard.

"Then all my priorities in life got pushed aside," Sieben said.

She was deployed to Iraq where she served in Operation Iraqi Freedom as the aid to General Jerry Lang, a 40-year Army Reserve veteran with roots in Milaca and Sauk Rapids.

When Sieben returned home from Iraq in February of 2010, and returned to work

with Target, she had an epiphany.

"I realized I needed more in life. I needed my priorities in life to be aligned," she said.

Sieben needed to slow down, do more good, and have more of an impact in the world around her.

She didn't want to be like many of her friends at the time- too busy to have time for each other and the loved ones around them.

Sieben was intrigued with a nutrition center her mother-in-law had started up in Little Falls.

To be honest, Sieben says she was intrigued to find a way NOT to follow in her mother-in-law's footsteps.

"I snuck up into her store in Little Falls trying to find something wrong," Sieben said.

"But I couldn't. I loved it," she said.

Jamie / See page 3

ALL 4 KIDS
Women in Business
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3 x 5 in
Process

THE HAIRDRESSER INC
Women in Business
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Mari Lou McCormic didn't choose banking

BANKING CHOSE HER

BY STACY DAHL
FOR THE MONTICELLO TIMES

Although she's well known to many in town as "your long-time Mortgage Lender serving the Monticello and Big Lake communities for over 35 years," the irony is that Mari Lou McCormic neither grew up here in Minnesota nor had any background, or interest, in banking.

She was born and raised in Rockville, Maryland and moved to Minnesota at age 22 to be with her fiancé (now husband, Charlie). With a background in HR and Training & Development at Control Data Corp, she secured a job commuting to the cities. Disliking the commute and not knowing anyone in Minnesota, she started searching for work locally and contacted a temp agency. Her first assignment was with First National Bank of Monticello (now Wells Fargo) to help with mortgage refinances.

Willing to learn, but admitting she knew nothing about banking, Mari Lou accepted the assignment, thinking it would be a good way to meet people and local business owners in the community. This was in the mid-80's back when interest rates were very high, in the teens. At that time there were no computers, no fax machines and documents were hand-prepared using a typewriter with carbon-



paper. This is much different than the mortgage industry that exists today.

Fast forward thirty five years later, that temporary job assignment where she had no intentions of working permanently, actually became a very fulfilling career.

Although she had no desire to teach in the classroom (being just a few classes away from a teaching degree before she moved) Mari Lou discovered the most enjoyable part of her job is not in the lending but in the teaching.

Currently an Employee-Owner at RiverWood Bank, McCormic thoroughly enjoys helping to educate her buyers, especially First Time Home Buyers. "There are many necessary life-skills that simply are not taught at home or in school. Buying a home is one of the biggest and most important purchases a person can make in their lifetime. So many people are ill equipped to handle the responsibility of home ownership and I see it as my mission to help change that."

"My goal isn't just to do a loan for somebody. I want to de-mystify the experience and equip my borrowers with the knowledge and understanding of how credit works, what affects their ability to qualify for financing and what options are available to them. Nothing is "cookie-cutter." I strive to

find the best custom-fit option for each borrower. Getting to know my customer is the relationship part of banking that I appreciate the most."

In addition to teaching First Time Home Buyer Classes for Wright County Community Action and Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, McCormic also serves on the Board and is a long-time Ambassador for the Monticello Chamber of Commerce. She enjoys meeting and welcoming new businesses to town and inviting them to attend events and to promote the City of Monticello and the Chamber.

When asked what advice she has to offer women who are interested in joining the business world, McCormic said, "Achievement and success are so much more than obtaining a title or the money earned. When I learned that a former customer of mine had made a career change and went into banking so that she too could help others the way that I had helped her, I knew that although I didn't choose banking, banking chose me."

McCormic believes that since we spend half of our waking hours at work, it is important to find what you love to do, to do it well and leave the legacy that you have inspired others to do the same.

Jamie: Soldier returned home from deployment in Iraq to open nutrition clubs in Central Minnesota

Continued from page 1

Why?

"She was serving her community, putting a smile on people's faces, and making people happy," Sieben said.

Sieben knew that it made no logical sense to leave Target, the security of her salary, and the insurance benefits that were helping her provide for her family.

"But seeing my mother-in-law's business literally changed me. It was like a divine intervention," she said.

Jamie Sieben was about to enter the world of health and wellness- and says it was the experiences of her deployment to Iraq that gave her the courage to jump into the world of being a business owner.

For years, Sieben ran her success-

ful business in St. Cloud and added worked tirelessly to add to her network of affiliated nutrition centers.

But life remained a bit more hectic that she preferred.

With her business in St. Cloud, her home in Clearwater, children schooling in the Annandale school district and her son's participating in youth hockey in Monticello, Sieben felt like she was always on the run.

That changed in 2019, with a series of life-changing moves.

Sieben had an opportunity to sell her St. Cloud business and opened Monti Nutrition in Monticello in October of 2019. The Sieben family relocated to rural Monticello.

"Now my family is in Monticello,

our schools are in Monticello, and my business is in Monticello," Sieben said.

"I love it here."

Monticello is the perfect city. It has proximity to Interstate 94, has a small-town feel, has a nice downtown, active chamber of commerce, the community center, a successful school district, and all the sports her children could want, she said.

"Monticello checks off all the boxes on the wish list of a community we would want to be in."

Monticello has also shown great support to Sieben and Monti Nutrition, which opened just five months prior to the shutdowns brought on by the coronavirus and the COVID-19

pandemic.

Monti Nutrition was eligible for payroll protection programs because it hadn't been open long enough.

"However, the community has really supported us," she said.

And because Sieben says, "It's important to serve the community that gives you everything," she plans on fund-raising programs for area support groups and organizations like her business and team of employees did in her years in St. Cloud.

Sieben is also giving back through community service. She was elected to the Monticello School Board in the November 2020 election.

"Our customers become family- and that is very important to us.

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HAIR OBSESSION SALON
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