



Mothers making special memories

by Dawn Pettit

photography by Challenge Roddie

Every day is a Kodak moment for Terri Gick and Stephanie Rahmatulla. The mother and daughter have turned the popular hobby of scrapbooking into a thriving business called Me & My Big Ideas in Lake Forest.

The joys of motherhood, especially at the early stages of starting a family, was the inspiration for the company, says Gick, a lifelong Orange County resident. "From the baby's first smile, first tooth, first step, first time sitting up, I took so many pictures those days," she says. "It was such a thrill."

Rahmatulla credits her mother with introducing her to scrapbooking in 1997. "In high school, I saved everything, from letters from my boyfriend, to dance tickets and graduation announcements," she recalls. She enrolled in a scrapbooking class but found she preferred to experiment on her own. She perfected her own techniques and went on to put her skills to work as a scrapbooking consultant.

About that time, Gick, who lives in the Newport Coast community of Newport Beach, owned and operated a publishing company, and was taking note of scrapbooking's surge in popularity.

What led the two to join forces and start the mother-daughter scrapbooking supply business is a story Rahmatulla, who lives in Mission Viejo, loves to share: "My

mom and I were literally sitting at my son's Little League game asking each other, 'What if we...?' Or 'Do you think we could...?'"

That brainstorming session planted the seeds for ideas they presented to artist friend Kay McConnaughey in 1998, which led the business partners to design stickers.

A major challenge early on was growing too big too fast, they say. At their first trade show, they sold more than \$50,000 worth of stickers. "We went home, cleared out the surfboards, bikes and baseball equipment from the garage, bought shelves at Home Depot for our inventory, set up the fax machine in the dining room, and went to work," recalls Gick of that hectic time.

The two soon outgrew the garage and moved their operations to a larger space, and they've had to do that four times in four years. Today the business is a brand leader in the multi-billion-dollar scrapbooking industry.

Mom and daughter both believe their success stems from a variety of factors. "We were in the right place at the right time with the right product," says Gick.

Rahmatulla says her biggest challenge has been balancing work and family life. "I love what I do for a living, and I love being a mom and a wife, too," says the former student of Saddleback and Irvine Valley colleges. "But as so many working moms know, it's difficult to have it all."

What isn't a challenge at all is working with her mother, she says, and the partnership has had unexpected advantages. "We have this uncanny way," Rahmatulla says, "of knowing what the other person is thinking." **OC**