

WORKING MOTHER

Easy, pretty
PICNICS

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TECHNOLOGY TRAILBLAZERS

JULY/AUGUST 2006 www.workingmother.com THE ART OF MAKING IT WORK

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CHERIE PALMER
SHE MADE SCRAPBOOKING HER BUSINESS



This Is How She Does It

CHERIE PALMER

35, owner, Keep It Reel, and VP of operations, Palmer's Ace Hardware, River Edge, NJ

It's 2:00 a.m., and Cherie Palmer's home computer is still humming. She scans in a photograph. Then another. With the click of a mouse, she drops in a video clip and sets it all to music. Voilà! In a matter of minutes, the 35-year-old entrepreneur and mother of three has created a lifetime memory in the form of a DVD movie and montage featuring family photos, memorabilia and home videos of one of her clients.

BY MICHELLE ROBERTS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC ROYCE



HAIR BY JEANIE SYTU FOR REDKEN/CITLER. MAKEUP BY CONTACT. STYLING BY STEPHANIE RYGORSKY. LINEN BLEND JACKET (\$532) AND PRINT SKIRT (\$664) BY HARVÉ BERNARD. BOLTONS, 232-684-0945. V-NECK TOP WITH MAXI-SKIRT ACCENTS IN BROWN (\$48) BY HARVÉ BERNARD. A NOSSA TERRA, 973-889-8464. TIGREYE WITH BIWA PEARL NECKLACE (\$360) BY ELYSSA B DESIGN, 310-360-0909. URBAN JUNGLE WOOD BEAD EARRINGS (\$32) BY CAROLLE. TOPS FROM 51 STORES.

SAMPLE

Cherie says a sleepless night now and then is worth the opportunity to pursue her passion: Keep It Reel (www.KeepItReelOnline.com), a business making digital family albums that she founded last year in her Washington Township, NJ, living room. “I love that I can provide a service that is truly unique and that celebrates families,” she says.

Her all-nighters come after hectic days full of school pickups, ballet drop-offs and managing HR and payroll at her husband’s family business. But this working mom of a 13-, 11- and 6-year-old is nonetheless grateful. “I feel lucky to be living my dream—having both a family and a rewarding career.” If that means that sometimes we’re making up a violin lesson or eating on the run, so be it.”

Born to a young mom and Navy dad in Fredericksburg, VA, Cherie chose not to attend college, though now she wishes she had. “I just didn’t know what I wanted to do,” she says. So she worked as an office manager, feeling “kind of lost” until she met her future husband, David, “a funny, dynamic man,” through a friend of a friend. The couple married 14 years ago, a month after Cherie’s twenty-first birthday.

Travis, their son, was born in 1993. Less than two years later, she gave birth to daughter Cassie. David worked for his family’s business, Palmer Brothers in River Edge, NJ, established in 1929 by his grandfather and now part of the Ace Hardware family of stores. Cherie stayed home with the kids. “It was tough financially,” she admits, “but I don’t regret it.”

Their third child, daughter Shaina, was born in 1999. The following year it became financially necessary for Cherie to go to work. “I felt very lucky that I had an instant job at the family store,” she says. She worked part-time, baby in tow, assisting her sister-in-law with office



Family portrait: Cherie with husband David and kids (from left) Shaina, 6, Cassie, 11, and Travis, 13.

•• Cherie’s tips

KEEP IT REAL. So what if you serve the same meal twice in a week?

REACH OUT. Never be afraid to ask for help, even if you’re not able to return the favor. All moms need to support one another.

INVOLVE YOUR FAMILY. If your partner enjoys making breakfast, great. If your children can help themselves, let them. It’s good for all of you!

HOW TO GET HER LOOK

Page 19: Jacket (\$132), top (\$48) and skirt (\$64), HarvÉ Benard. This page: shirt and skirt (\$44 each), Emma James; tank (\$8), Marshalls. Page 22: Tunic (\$88), Reba; trousers (\$198), Paige Premium Denim.

Shaina’s dress (\$17), Marshalls; Cassie’s top (\$13) and skirt (\$25), The Children’s Place; Travis’s shirt (\$10), Marshalls.

work. “It was quite an adjustment, but I really enjoyed the stimulating contacts and mental challenges.” When Shaina was 2, Cherie put her in a small, nearby day care a few days a week, and gradually added hours and took on more responsibility at the store, but always picked her children up after school. Cherie threw herself into her work, teaching herself about everything from health insurance

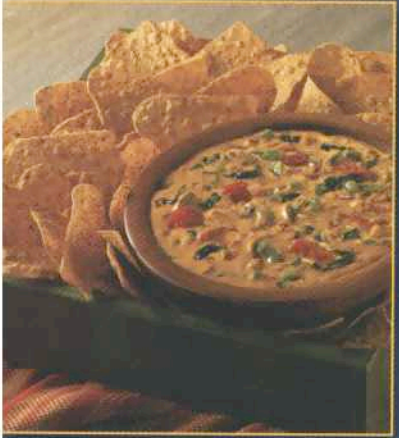
forms to payroll taxes and setting up the company’s first HR department.

At the same time, her lifelong hobbies, journaling and photography, evolved in a surprising way. In 2003, Cherie sat in on a seminar on how to turn scrapbooking into a business. A week later, Pages You’ll Love was born, with Cherie landing her first paying client two weeks after that. “People gave me their photos and memorabilia and I gave back an elegant custom-designed slip-covered scrapbook,” she says. “As much as I enjoy human resources, this is my passion—creatively telling and preserving people’s stories.”

But the creation of the books was highly time-consuming, and the business wasn’t cost-efficient. Even so, Cherie worked feverishly for two years as she juggled her family’s needs and work at the store. Then her husband’s brother announced he and his family were leaving Palmer’s. “This business has supported my husband’s family for seventy-seven years,” Cherie says. To keep it going, she chose to close down her own business. “Doing both was just too much.”

She was promoted to VP of operations at the store, adding banking and cashier

ON COVER: TIRROUSI; LITTLE EYELET COTTON SHIRT (844) AND PRINT BOMBYN BATHIC COTTON SKIRT (844) BY EMMA JAMES; 800-555-9898 FOR STORES; WHITE TANK TOP (\$8) FROM MARSHALLS; WWW.MARSHALLSONLINE.COM; FOR STORES; TUDORCHIE; ANOYXELLOW; QUARTZ; FLOWER PRINT DRESS (\$17), MARSHALLS; ON CASIE: TOP WITH EMBROIDERED FLOWERS (\$32) AND CRINKLE TIE DYE SKIRT (\$52) FROM THE CHILDREN’S PLACE; WWW.CHILDRENSPRACE.COM; ITALIAN FLIP-FLOPS IN WHITE (\$5) BY STEVE AND BARBARA’S; WWW.STEVEANDBARBARA.COM; FOR STORES; ON TRAVIS: STRIPED SHIRT (810), MARSHALLS.



TOSTITOS® BRAND Veggie Cheese Dip

- Ingredients:**
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
 - 1 c. quartered cherry tomatoes
 - 1/2 c. roughly chopped fresh spinach
 - 1 c. diced green bell pepper
 - 1 c. diced red onion
 - 1/2 c. diced button mushrooms
 - 1 c. fresh sweet corn kernels (can substitute frozen corn)
 - 1/5 1/2-oz. jar of TOSTITOS® Reduced Fat Zesty Cheese Dip
 - 1 Tbsp. roughly chopped fresh parsley

- Directions:**
- Heat oil in nonstick pan over high heat.
 - Add tomatoes, spinach, peppers, onions, mushrooms and corn and sauté for four minutes.
 - Meanwhile, pour TOSTITOS® Reduced Fat Zesty Cheese Dip into a microwave-safe bowl and microwave for 30 seconds or until warm.
 - Remove bowl from microwave and stir in vegetables and parsley.
 - Serve immediately with TOSTITOS® Multigrain Tortilla Chips and a side of fresh broccoli florets.
 - Serves 4-6

For more great TOSTITOS® recipes or to submit one of your own, visit www.tostitos.com.

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SAMPLE

management to her HR duties. “But I just couldn’t quit my hobbies. I kept telling myself my time would come again.” And it did. She transitioned to digital photography, taught herself basic video editing and started making DVD films and montages. Last fall, her hobby again blossomed into a moneymaking venture.

Cherie continues to head up HR at the store. But with the success of her own business, Keep It Reel, she limits her time in the office to two days a week

and works from home the other three. She also gets home early enough to take her children to their afterschool activities.

To help manage her three kids and two jobs, she’s devised many life-simplifying strategies: giving up a luxury or two so she can afford cleaning help; having fresh vegetables delivered and dry cleaning picked up; asking at-home-mom pals for last-minute help. David carries some of the load too, getting the kids ready in the morning, driving them to school and, of course, playing with them a lot!

Now that she juggles two jobs, Cherie expects the kids to do as much as they can for themselves. “We have a self-service household,” she explains. “I make it as easy as possible—frozen waffles, prepackaged salads from Trader Joe’s. You get the idea.” Travis often helps her prepare dinners. Not only is food on the table faster, but also there’s a special bond between them now.

Cherie is making the most of her career visions, too. She eventually wants to become a videographer and produce



“I BELIEVE IN WHAT I’M DOING AND FEEL LUCKY TO BE LIVING MY DREAM.”



short family-history and tribute documentaries. In the process, she’s creating her own life story—one that’s making her proud. “I feel I’ve come full circle. I have a beautiful family, and I’ve created a business doing exactly what I’ve always been passionate about: documenting life.” ■

LINEA TUNG (A SING RED) BY REGA, WWW.DILLAROSS.COM; TROUSERS IN DARK STREET (\$499) BY PAIGE PREMIUM DENIM; NECKLACE AND NECKTIE (\$49) BY CAROL-LEE; BLOOMINGDALE’S STORES; NATIONAL WOOD; SUMMER SOURCE; BARRINGER; (4/4) BY VILLAGE; KENNY STORES.