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Florist all abloom for weekend craft fair

By Heather Barr
THE NEWS-TIMES
Mary DeLuise of New Fairfield, who owns the floral design business Bunch of Blooms, began taking care of flowers as a child.



The News-Times/Chris Ware
Mary DeLuise, owner of Bunch of Blooms, works on an arrangement at her New Fairfield home.

Her father, John Barnick of Bethel, had four gardens with multiple flower beds surrounding the family's backyard pool.

"It was a relaxation hobby" for her dad, who was an engineer, said DeLuise, 35, a petite, dark-haired woman with lots of energy and zest. "He wanted to make the yard look pretty. He taught me to grow with seeds, the watering process."

Even then, Mary DeLuise would gather flowers in a basket and arrange them for fun.

This weekend, she will showcase fresh flowers and her silk and dried flower handiwork in the Spring Fling Craft Show at Sacred Heart of Jesus School, 17 Cottage St., Danbury.

Her display can be seen Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to noon.

A photo of one of her multi-flower bouquets was among 150 from U.S. florists featured in Florist Review magazine's Picture Perfect Wedding contest.

Around 1998, after DeLuise had spent years as an executive secretary and in human relations administration, the company she was working for restructured and she was left looking for a job.

Life is short, she told herself, and decided to make her childhood hobby her new career. She worked at a few floral shops and greenhouses before starting her business.

Her vision for Bunch of Blooms, which she runs from her home, was to provide "unique custom designed pieces, exceptional one- to-one service" and quality flowers at reasonable prices. She has assistants, including her husband, Joseph, who recently designed her Web site.

In 2001, DeLuise studied with noted designer Ned Davis at the Vermont Academy of Floral Design. The school teaches basic and new theories of design, as well as how to think outside the box.

To keep on top of trends, she attends Connecticut Floral Association trade shows, where she's learned techniques like how to manipulate greenery or flowers

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into loops, rolls and other forms.

DeLuise also looks for ideas when she's traveling. In September 2005, she visited a friend's tulip farm in Australia and she would like to study flowers in Holland some day. She orders flowers from everywhere, including spider grevelia from Israel and coxcomb from Mexico.

And she does think outside the box. For a wedding at Mohegan Sun Casino last November, DeLuise carried out a fall theme with silk flowers, colored leaves sprayed with glitter, a scarecrow and Indian corn.

When a customer wanted "something really different" for her mother's funeral and said her mother liked cats, DeLuise attached different shades of pink flowers to a grapewine wreath and added a stuffed cat with a ball of yarn that unwound around the circle.

"It looked like the cat was playing with the wreath," DeLuise said.

To make "light-hearted" bar mitzvah decorations for a boy who "didn't want it to look like a girlie piece," she made twisted wire and tropical flowers shoot up from rectangle pots, like flowers growing in a garden.

"I don't have other distractions like at a retail shop," DeLuise said, "so I can spend more time with each customer to get to know them, their likes and dislikes and can stay within their budget.

She also has shared her career with her father.

In 2002, after seeing an ad seeking volunteers, Mary and Joseph DeLuise and John Barnick worked on a float for the Tournament of Roses parade in Pasadena, Calif.

"It was amazing everything we learned and the process," DeLuise said. The Alice in Wonderland-themed float used flowers from all over the world, as well as fruit and artichokes.

"The learning process never ends," she added.

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Call Mary DeLuise at (203) 241-8006 or visit <http://www.bunchofblooms.com>

Contact Heather Barr

at hbarr@newstimes.com

or at (203) 731-3331.

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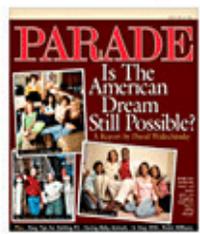
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