

LIVING

New Milford woman aims 'to touch and help people' through jewelry designs

Andrea Valluzzo





Courtesy of Denise Cox / Contributed photo



Although Denise Cox of New Milford has overcome many challenges in her life, she maintains a positive outlook, which she incorporates into the striking statement jewelry pieces she designs.

With collections like Harmony, Unity and Purpose, Cox creates jewelry that means something to her; more importantly, it has meaning to the women who wear it.

“That’s always been my goal my whole life: to touch and help people,” Cox said. “To do it through the gift of my design is an answer to a prayer, and to be on the journey I am on is so exciting.”

Cox said jewelry like hers need not be expensive to be high quality. Her pieces connect to other women and become something meaningful to them. “They tell a story about that person so it actually becomes a personal story of your own. It’s not my story, it’s your story,” she said. “When you are wearing a piece of my jewelry, it is a statement, but it also has meaning behind it of what is personal to you.”

Bold yet elegant, her jewelry finds its inspiration in many things, from Cox’s travels to the women she meets in her business and the challenges she has overcome. From nearly being killed by a drunk driver and needing reconstruction surgery on her face, to a serious bout with Lyme Disease, an 11-year struggle with infertility and back-to-back deaths of her mother and her husband, she not only has overcome immense challenges but persevered.

Cox described serving as caregiver to both her husband of 25 years and her mother as a “gift,” one that helped give her a voice to share her story instead of hiding it. “It’s okay to share,” she said, “and it actually helps other people and it gives other people the ability to have their voice.”

Always designing new pieces — often to raise money for philanthropic causes — Cox recently created a new piece that is a blending of her Harmony, Unity and Purpose lines all in one. “It is based in scripture. It has the cross in it, because I believe the gifts given to me are from God,” she said.

Cox started making jewelry while working in marketing for the apparel and design industry. She first had a side hustle making and painting handbags that she accented with beads but soon segued into jewelry making. She was quite taken with natural stones that the Earth produced, which didn’t require dyeing or heat treatment to be beautiful. Over time, her style has evolved; now, most of her jewelry pieces are mostly elegant metals, accented by stones like malachite or quartz.

Unity, one of her inaugural jewelry collections, is a common theme that comes up when discussing her work. Cox said empowering women lies at the heart of her efforts. "Unity is about the power that women have together," she said.

In her work with a women's center in New Jersey, run by a friend of hers, for example, she said that the women, most over age 50, are facing shared challenges such as hormones and being empty nesters. "What I found is when you start coming together and you talk about it together, it eases the burden and gives you strength and maybe an inspiration to do something greater than yourself. That's what I have found with me as a designer is I'm able to give more if I share more."

Some of her philanthropic designs have included pieces to address teen suicide or opiate use. "This just gives people the opportunity to have a voice, be heard and to be validated. At the same time you're raising money for really great causes so you're bringing awareness into the community," she said. "That's what pumps me and what inspires me is helping others and giving a voice to things that need to have a voice."

On the lighter side, Cox also discussed the impact wearing a strong piece of jewelry can have in the current climate, where many people are working from home and attending Zoom meetings.

"I think that pops of color show confidence, and I think your jewelry defines you as a person and tells your story so it's a perfect opportunity...to take time for yourself and honor yourself and wear something that is how you're feeling that day."

Always on the lookout for new projects, Cox recently began a Facebook and Instagram series to empower women titled "the eyes are the windows to our souls," where she posts photographs of women wearing her jewelry and in the captions they share their stories of what the piece means to them or how they find unity, harmony and purpose. "This is me living out what my purpose is."

Andrea Valluzzo is a freelance writer.

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