

Women's Business Enterprise
National Council

WBENC

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

DECEMBER 2016



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FOR 2017
NATIONAL
EVENTS!

WBENC'S STUDENT ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAM
MENTORS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

WOMEN OWNED BACKSTORY

UPCYCLE YOUR KEEPSAKES WITH BOW K

WHEN DEANNA RUSSO FOUND HERSELF STRUGGLING WITH SCISSORS AND A PAPER PLATE TO CONSTRUCT A MAKESHIFT BOUQUET FOR HER BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING REHEARSAL, SHE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY

THAT CHANGED HER LIFE. THE QUESTION WAS SIMPLY: WHY WASN'T THERE A PRODUCT ON THE MARKET DESIGNED TO ALLOW ANYONE TO CREATE BEAUTIFUL BOUQUET KEEPSAKES?

Russo answered her own question when she founded **Bow K** in July 2013 with her cornerstone product, the Bow K® Ribbon Craft & Keepsake, which allows for repurposing and reusing bows, ribbons, and other decorations to make collectible mementos. With 48 holes in the Bow K® surface, it is an easy-to-use tool for designing crafty creations.

“Although most people think of weddings with our product, there really is no wrong way to Bow K,”

says Russo. “It can be used for any celebration or season. In addition to creating rehearsal bouquets, crafters can Bow K centerpieces, tree toppers, edible displays, and more. Fresh flowers are easily incorporated as are floral picks, wired decorations, balloons, cake pops, and many other possibilities.”

As the holidays approach, Russo is fast to point out that Bow K can help consumers create memories, be more intentional with holiday wrapping, and also save money.

“If every American family reused just two feet of holiday ribbon, we could tie a bow around the entire planet!” says Russo. “With your family, especially kids, make a game out of decorating your Bow K with elements from your gifts. As you get your decorations out each year, use your Bow K to remember—and reuse—your keepsake ribbons and bows from the year before.”

Russo loves the transition to entrepreneurship after a high-pressure career in the gaming, banking, and



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medical device industries. Headquartered in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, she got involved with the Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE), a WBENC Regional Partner Organization, where she learned about certification. She became WBENC-Certified in November 2015.

"I attended the 2016 Summit & Salute in Phoenix, and I went to the Procurement Opportunity Connection Meet and Greet, which was amazing," says Russo. "I gained valuable feedback regarding my product and how it would be received by each retailers' unique set of customers."

Russo remembers that one Corporate Member didn't feel their customers were do-it-yourself savvy enough to understand the Bow K sold on it's own. However, they did feel their customers would be interested in the Gift Box Set, which was still in the planning stage at that time. Now that the Gift Set is prototyped, Russo is excited to circle back with this retailer to continue their conversation.

Russo also knows that doing your homework pays off at WBENC events. After a critical conversation with the Walmart representative at Summit & Salute, he suggested she apply for the [Walmart U.S. Manufacturing Summit](#), which Russo had already done. Hearing that, the Walmart representative was immediately

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impressed—and during her flight home, Russo noted that her application was "suddenly" approved. As a result, Bow K was invited to onboard for Walmart.com.

In addition to developing relationships with Corporate Members, Russo is proud to be part of the WBE community around the WBENC network.

"Take advantage of the network and find situations where you can support each other," says Russo.

"When I speak to audiences, I talk about Bow K

being a Women Owned product, and how that helps open doors."

Russo recently got involved in the [Entrepreneurship For All](#) program in Massachusetts, winning a pitch competition last month during which she articulated her differentiation as a WBENC-Certified business.

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 bowk.com

BOW K[®]

1 Russo with her winning pitch competition prize and her display of Bow K tools and the Bow K Gift Set Box.

2 The holiday Bow K[®] Ribbon & Keepsake tool

3 Deanna Russo, Bow K Owner