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# An Interview with Irene Hurley

**Debi Pinelli • A & J Interiors**

**How did you get started in the window treatment business?**

Well, it all started when I was ten and participated in a free sewing class at the Bayonne Public Library with my sister Nancy and our friends, the Noonan sisters. There were 19 students in the class with only one sewing machine, but I was hooked. My first project was a red and white striped flannel nightgown and I completed it from start to finish. In my early years as a “socialite” I definitely favored the fashion side of sewing. Both of my grandmothers were accomplished seamstresses and although I never knew my maternal grandmother, Anna Doddy Hepburn, I do believe her love of the “art of fabrication” is in my blood. My paternal grandmother, Irene Martin Quigley, demonstrated to me at an early age the amazing dresses we could create with simple fabrics. Growing up in a large family money was not available for such luxuries as new skirts or dresses so by the time I was 14 I was making all of my own clothing.



I continued to sew as a hobby and in 1976 when I got married and had my first home I made all of the draperies. At the time, I was employed with Shearson-American Express in NYC, so there was little time to pursue my hobby as a career. I became a part time drapery workroom in 1985 and operated this business from a small room in my basement. I took a short leave of 4 years from the workroom, as my husband, Leo’s job took us to Houston, Texas. 1996 brought us back to New Jersey and I immediately opened Irene Hurley Designs, a retail design and fabrication studio, which I still operate today on a full time basis. I am in the process of moving into a brand new studio in my home – it is perfect in every way.

**How many employees do you have?**

I have always been the sole employee, but I do engage other workrooms when the project is larger than I can manage. In our own WCAA Chapter, I rely on Viki Lee with Masterpiece for all of my upholstery work. WCAA NJ Chapter member, Evelyn Lalicata has worked with me on several of my larger projects, as have some of our industry partners.

**Do you serve the residential or commercial markets?**

Although the majority of my work is residential, I have done several funeral chapels. I prefer the residential because it gives me the opportunity to develop a more personal relationship with the client.

**What types of products and services do you offer?**

Irene Hurley Designs offers a full range of hard and soft window coverings as well as bedding and accessories. We offer fabrics, trims and hardware. Other services available are color consultation, furniture and accessories selection, space planning and project management. We also offer custom quilting, embroidery, Celtic appliqué and various other embellishment services.

**What benefits do you get from being a member of the WCAA?**

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# Message From the President

Ellen Salkin • NJ Chapter President

2014 has gotten off to a great start. Our January Show & Tell meeting, though not as well attended as some of our meetings was a big hit and everyone asked for it again for next year. We clearly achieved our goal by inspiring others and showing our members how we each start a project and follow through with that project.

Amy Hannenberg of Stacey Garcia Designs also inspired us with new color combinations and design trends.

The point here is inspiration; not only from ourselves but from others. Inspiration is personal. It is what you feel and what moves and motivates you. You can't manufacture it but you can start it and pay attention to it. We can teach ourselves to be aware and open to it. We all have the ability to tap into new ideas; we just have to be open to them.

Our monthly WCAA meetings can help us to be inspired not only in our businesses but in our personal lives. I know they do it for me.



## Investing in Your Business

Rosemarie Garner • NJ Chapter Vice President

January is a great time to take a look at your business and to see how you ran it for the last year. It is a time to crunch numbers, reflect on business practices, and project for the year ahead. It is also a great time to invest in your business. That can mean a number of things. Maybe update your website, or even GET a website going. Having a web presence is essential to today's market. It can mean investing in a new machine, or maybe a new line of fabric samples.

Another way to invest in your business is to look at your pricing and to see if you might need to change it going forward. A number of our members, plus a few non members, took advantage of Michele Williams' "Pricing Without Emotion" class at the end of January. It was one of the most valuable things that I have done for my business in ages, and I feel safe in saying that it probably holds true for everyone who attended. Michele presented the material with knowledge and humor, and really gets into the heads and habits of women business owners and what makes them undercharge (men: not to worry, the class is not specifically geared toward women, but we happened to be an all female class). An invaluable investment in our businesses.

I am always going on about the resources that we have in our own chapter. BUT, taking advantage of the knowledge of our members is another way to invest in your business. Reach out to someone who has an area of expertise and ask if you can come spend a day with them to see how they do things. I recently hosted two of our members for an afternoon of roman shade making. We went through my process (of course not the only way to make romans) of fabricating romans, and I can tell you that the "teacher" always learns something, too.

Michele wanted us to make a distinction between having an expensive hobby and having a real business. I think this is a wise thing to reflect on. Investing in your business, at whatever level you are able to, brings you to the next level and keeps you moving forward.

Here's to a profitable 2014 for all of our members!



# WCAA National News

**Linda Principe • National Board President**

Membership benefits are designed to give WCAA members value for their membership dollars. Karen Groppe at the National office and the board are continually looking for ideas and opportunities to enhance our benefits program.

One of our most popular national benefits is our monthly Lunch n Learn program. This free webinar provides valuable education and information that we can apply to our businesses. If you haven't participated yet, I would encourage you to do so. There are several upcoming webinars that will focus on new ideas to build your business.



One of our newest benefits is a discount from the Kimpton Hotels. This is a boutique hotel chain in various cities around the country. Although I have never personally stayed at a Kimpton, I have heard the quality and service are second to none. On your next vacation or travel, why not look into Kimpton and use your WCAA discount?

Don't forget about TransFirst, our credit card processing company offering very competitive rates. They are a terrific partner to WCAA.

Watch your emails and social media for the next announcement of a great new benefit that every business owner can take advantage of!

Are there additional benefits you would like to see? Simply email me or call me with your ideas any time.

I think all of us in the Central NJ chapter can agree that one of our greatest benefits is being a member of our wonderful chapter!

## Interview with Irene Hurley

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One of the many benefits is the ability to seek advice when working on an unfamiliar area of design. We have an extremely talented and knowledgeable team of members who are more than willing to share. Another benefit is having a team of officers led by our president, Ellen Salkin, that ensures the membership is receiving the very best in education through our monthly speakers and our annual Windows to Success. The networking alone is a win/win and the friendships made are long-lasting. I have been a member of the WCAACNJ Chapter since 2000.

### **What sets you apart from the competition?**

I believe my ability to see beyond the basic, to help my client envision the end result, and to ultimately produce that result sets me apart. I always work up a sample for a client when a drawing is just not enough. Having a background in fashion design enables me to produce for my client a truly unique product. Because of my unique background in fashion, I offer to my client the ability and the desire to truly make a couture product.

### **What do you like to do in your spare time?**

I absolutely love to spend as much time as possible with my grandsons, Brendan and Liam. They are one of life's greatest joys. Time with my family is most important, and it is not often enough. I love to go antique shopping with my husband, Leo. I adore black and white movies, especially Audrey Hepburn films. Her sense of style is second to none. I love to learn – so taking a class in painting, cooking or sewing related is pure joy for me.

### **What is your favorite book or genre?**

My favorite book is “The Road Less Traveled” by M. Scott Peck. I love the opening line “Life is difficult”. It sets the stage for the true understanding of the ups and downs, the disappointments and failures as well as the joys that we encounter on life's journey. I love it because it helps set you on the path of change....and life is ever-changing.

### **What is your Favorite cuisine?**

American...I love a great pot-roast or loin of pork with all of the trimmings. Today's chefs give us such a new and versatile menu with recipes to recreate all of our favorites.

### **Describe your best vacation memory**

I loved all of our vacations with our children, but I would say that my best vacation memory was our first trip to Ireland with both of our children. They were young enough to enjoy every snippet of the trip, yet old enough to recognize the history of the country that gave birth to their great grandparents.

### **Tell me more about your family**

I am married to Leo Hurley, Sr. for 38 amazing years, celebrating our anniversary today, 2/13/14. Someone once told me “we all need someone in this life who thinks we walk on water” – for me, that someone is Leo Hurley. His support, confidence, encouragement and love have helped me to achieve my goals. We are the proud parents of Leo, Jr., an attorney with Connell-Foley, Jersey City office, and Maureen and her husband, Patrick Gilroy. Maureen is a realtor with Ward-Wight Sotheby's, Sea Girt and Patrick is a Sergeant with the Spring Lake PD. They are the parents of Brendan, 6 and Liam, 3. I was born into a large, Irish Catholic family, the third oldest daughter of the late Peg and Jim Quigley. They taught me at a young age the value of life's true gifts – our faith, our family and our friends. I am blessed to have four sisters and three brothers, and a host of aunts, uncles, cousins and friends who have inspired me throughout my life.



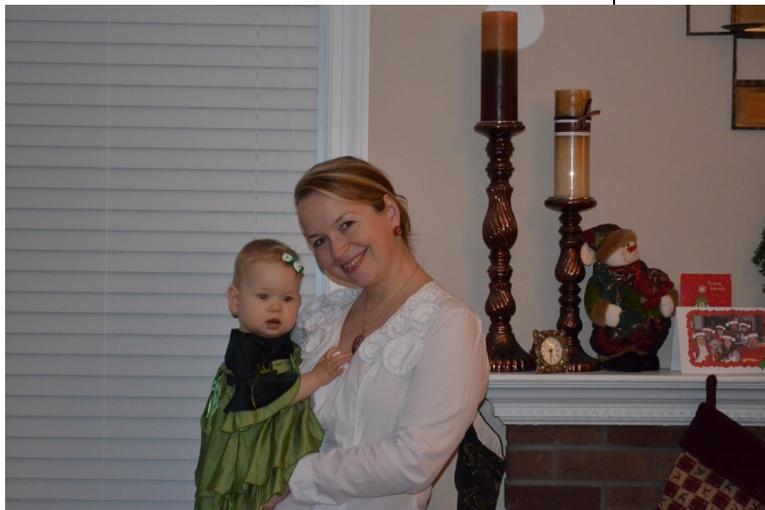
# 3 Business Lessons From a Mom-Preneur

Vita Vygovska • Vitalia, Inc.

It's good to be back!

It's been exactly a year since I've contributed to our newsletter. For a good reason, of course. As many of you know, last year marked the birth of my second child, daughter Anna. Now that she turned one, I can't help but look back at the year passed (and in some respects at my whole journey as a mother) and reflect on the lessons learned.

My reflections will be relevant to you also, many of you mothers, albeit much more experienced than me. Relevant because our businesses, in many respects, are like children, for which we care, lose sleep, stress, get frustrated, enjoy, and love. And because most of you have so much experience, more than anyone else, will you understand and relate to what I'm about to share.



**Love ALL of your business.**

It goes without saying that we love our children. We would give up anything for their well-being. And the thought of them getting hurt makes my hair stand. It also goes without saying that some of our most frustrating moments are caused by our children. My 4year old son throws such tantrums that you would think the earth stopped rotating around him. My daughter is growing to understand the difference between apple sauce and squash baby meal, with obvious preference, and asserting her little personality so that the entire neighborhood can hear her. I know many of you are thinking 'wait till they become teenagers'.

I love my kids anyway, tantrums and all. In business, we have to love all of it as well. So often, I hear my clients complain about the parts of their business they don't enjoy: financials, pricing, sales appointments, etc. They complain they are not good at reading their p&l's, they feel strange stating the price to a client's face, they don't know how to forecast their sales, it takes them outside of their comfort zone to walk into a furniture store and introduce themselves, the list can go on. But regardless of the excuses, the reality remains that all of these things are necessary to run a successful business (just like tantrums are



part of growing up). And because they are all part of the business, we have to love each and every aspect of our business ,for they make up the whole of it. Love vs. reject, love vs. use negative language (i.e. 'I don't', 'I can't', 'I won't'). Love vs. get frustrated.

**It takes practice.**

"How can I love something, if I don't even know how to do it", you may be saying right now. Here comes motherhood lesson #2. My daughter is learning to blow kisses. Right now, she looks pretty silly doing it. Her little tongue twists into a weird-looking pretzel worthy of a youtube video. She has no idea what to do with her hand, as she raises her spread fingers, up to her eyes. It's just not happening. Not yet, at least. If you thought

this example was too cute, I have others, much more frustrating and vocal: learning to roll, stay on her tummy, sit, transition, kneel, nurse, sleep, etc. Not to overstate the obvious, but when children are born, they know nothing and we have to teach them everything, regardless how frustrating it may be for us. We tell them that it takes practice and we patiently practice it with them.

And so our businesses also need us to stay calm and patient, as we learn to navigate the various aspects of running them. Unlike children, who know nothing, we are ahead of the game because we at least know and like some things. We

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OMG!!

## I Should Have Gone to That Meeting

Robin Matthews • Seams Sew Right

Our year ended on a high note at our annual holiday party, which was held at the American Hotel in Freehold. After a brief meeting where officers were sworn in, members were treated to a fabulous luncheon and musical entertainment by Stearns Matthews. Everyone enjoyed singing along to well known holiday songs. Stearns' interpretation of what "Jingle Bells" would be about in 2013 was hilarious! A competitive and raucous game of "Name that Tune" completed a very enjoyable afternoon.

On January 9th members shared photos and samples of projects they worked on during the past year. What an amazing and talented group we have!!!! It was fascinating to see how designers and workrooms worked together to tackle challenging windows and projects. Everyone learned something and members said it was one of the best meetings we have had!

Amy Hannenberg, senior strategist for Stacey Garcia Textiles (NY City) presented a design program on patterns, color and lifestyle trends at our February meeting. Amy talked about inspiration for fabrics and forecasting trends. She presented and discussed 6 different styles that are trending right now, and passed around fabrics that were representative of each trend. We also learned the difference between a fad and a trend. I have a feeling everyone is looking at their surroundings a little differently after that meeting!



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just have to now get to know and learn to love others. I often practice stating a high price, so that it can roll off my tongue and not choke me. I often practice reaching out to referral partners by making myself pick up the phone and calling them. I practice by doing. I may not like it. I know I have to love it.

### **Enjoy the moment.**

I'm sure you've dispensed this piece of advice to many new mothers. I'm sure you said to me. I'll be honest, I didn't listen very well with my first. But I listened exceptionally well with my second. With my daughter, everything is a lot easier, nicer, more enjoyable, although fundamentally nothing changed. What's changed is my attitude.

You've been in our industry long enough to know that business is cyclical, this too shall pass, and it's just a phase. Nothing is ever as good or as bad as it seems. Things change all the time and unless we tell ourselves to enjoy it just the way it is right now, we'll miss it. Already, I miss my daughter being a newborn. I miss night-time feedings (never thought I would ever say it). I miss nursing her. And it's only been a year! Likewise, I look back, and I miss the brand new business owner eight years ago, so eager and excited. Now it seems I can do it with my eyes closed. But what will I miss about today eight years from now. That's what I need to enjoy.

And so I encourage you to practice enjoying, appreciating, cherishing, and loving ALL of your business while the moment is here.

## Spotlight on Linda Principe

Kelli Chitty • Interiors by Kelli

The WCAA National board will install new directors in June and at the same time will vote in an Executive Committee, consisting of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. At that time Linda Principe will end her term as President of the WCAA National Board, but will remain on the Board in her new capacity as Past President.

Many of our members know Linda well, but may not be familiar with her history and accomplishments for the WCAA – both in New Jersey and at the National level. As Linda winds down her term as President of the National board now is a perfect time to thank her for all she has done for our organization.



Linda has been a member of WCAA since 1997 and is one of the founding members of the WCAA Central NJ Chapter. She joined the Chapter Board as Secretary in 2005 and became President in 2008. Under Linda's leadership the Chapter grew from 35 to 76 members and during her term the Chapter was awarded the Participation, Activity & Leadership (PAL) Award from WCAA National. Linda launched the original Windows to Success, which remains our only fundraiser and the direct source of funding for all of our monthly programs. It is a little known fact that Linda funded the original Windows to Success program with her own money because there wasn't enough money in the treasury at the time. Linda implemented an excellent tradition of mentoring future leaders for WCAA, as evidenced by the continued success of our Chapter – still the largest and most successful in the organization.

Obviously Linda's leadership skills didn't go unnoticed – as she was elected to the WCAA National Board in 2009. During her tenure she has served as National Board Vice President and President. Under Linda's leadership, the National Board held its first ever national trade show, *Inspire* in 2011 and again in 2012. Leading an organization with over 1,000 members is no easy task – but Linda does it expertly, with the highest level of professionalism. She has been a valued mentor to many and I know she will continue to be a valued presence on the National Board, in our Chapter and the organization as a whole.

Please join me in congratulating Linda on a job very well done for the past 9 years, and in wishing her continued success in her role as Past President.

# Member Projects

Kelli Chitty • Interiors by Kelli

In the September, 2013 issue of the Newsletter we highlighted several rooms that our members worked on for Lin's Linens. We included before pictures of this room - but not the completed room - because it was going to be published in *Design NJ*.

This room was done for Nicole, the mother of three young daughters. The inspiration for Nicole's room was a trip to Nantucket that she took the previous summer with her husband and girls. She said that vacation was the last time she could remember feeling carefree and wanted to recreate that feeling and mood in her bedroom.

WCAA NJ chapter members who worked on this room include Liz Balogh, Kelli Chitty, Francine Hyland, Chris Kahler, Evelyn LaLicata, and Darcy Litt. Donations were made by the following vendors: Hunter Douglas donated the shutters, Designers Resource donated the blinds and drapery hardware and Stout Brothers discounted the fabric used for the custom drapery.



Volunteers from Sherwin Williams did the painting and donated the paint.

For more pictures and details about this room, you read the article in the April/May, 2014 issue of *Design NJ*:

<https://www.designnewjersey.com/features/index.cfm?id=209>

If you would like more information about Lin's Linens visit the website at [www.LinsLinens.org](http://www.LinsLinens.org)

Before



After

To submit photos of your work for an upcoming issue, contact Ellen Salkin at [wcaanj@optonline.net](mailto:wcaanj@optonline.net)