



A Mother's

Like any daughter who's close to her mother, **Independent Executive Senior Sales Director Lia Carta** knew where to go when she needed an honest opinion about a big decision. She was thinking about starting a Mary Kay business, but her plate was already full. Lia was working full time and carrying 21 college credits in night school. And there were other issues. Even though over the years Lia's mom, Kathy Graham, a Mary Kay Independent Beauty Consultant, had told her great things about the Company and the flexible opportunity a Mary Kay business could offer, Lia wondered if she really was cut out for sales. Did the cosmetics industry hold anything for her? Was this the best time to start something new? But as moms often prove, Lia's most ardent advocate had a clear vision for her daughter's eventual success. Before Lia could even finish asking, "Mom, do you think I should start a Mary Kay –," the positive answer came pouring forth on a flood of emotion. "I'll never forget that moment," says Lia. "As soon as she heard the direction my question was taking, she interrupted me with a resounding "YES! You would be GREAT at owning a Mary Kay business! Lia, you'll go to the top!"

So putting aside her self-doubts, Lia signed her Independent Beauty Consultant Agreement in October 2005. She started working her Mary Kay business along with her full-time job and balanced both with night school. "With any other kind of opportunity, I could easily have felt overwhelmed," she says. "But that didn't happen with my Mary Kay business. Even with my busy schedule, I loved how my business fit around my life. I could weave in my appointments as needed."

Eight months later, Lia had added some team members to her business, and her Mary Kay life was producing unexpected returns beyond her sales. She was starting to see firsthand the intangible paychecks of the heart that had convinced her mother Mary Kay was the perfect choice. Then one evening Lia was on her way to a success meeting, proudly wearing her red jacket, when her destination took a life-changing detour. "I was pulling out of my driveway when I got a call to come to the hospital right away. I knew something had happened to my mom." She describes a night that even today is shrouded in a fog of unreality. "When I got there, I could tell by the looks on the doctors' faces that the news was going to be bad. Even with my sense of foreboding, it was worse than I could have imagined."

Taking Stock

In the blink of an eye and without warning, Lia had lost her mother to an aneurysm. The brave woman she so deeply admired, her best friend her whole life, was just 43.

"When I finally made it back home that night, my mind was racing," Lia shares. "My mom was a single parent. Who was going to take care of my younger siblings? Who would go through her house and finalize funeral arrangements? Who would look after my grandparents who were devastated at the loss of their daughter?" She didn't have the time or the luxury of allowing her spirit to grieve. Someone had to step in. Lia stood in front of her bedroom mirror in a daze, knowing the woman looking back at her was that person. Then, as though her mother were by her side, nudging her with

Legacy

a loving reminder, Lia suddenly saw the solution to all her concerns. *"My answer was staring right back at me. My red jacket!"* she says, her fresh sense of revelation and relief still evident in her voice. *"I took that epiphany as a sign that now was my time to 'step up.' My family needed me, and I needed the flexibility, and ultimately the success, that can come with a full-time, no-holds-barred Mary Kay business."*

The following morning Lia received a call from her employer who politely expressed her condolences. In the next breath, Lia's boss said she needed to know when Lia was returning to work. *"That was a huge wake-up call, a life lesson for me. I had always been there to work overtime or on weekends when the company needed me. I traveled on business trips for three solid years. But when I needed her the most, my manager just wanted to know when I would be back to work."*

Over the next few days, Lia took stock of her life. The support she had received from her Mary Kay family in just a few months' time led to her decision to resign from her job. *"The morning after Mom's passing, my Independent Executive Senior Sales Director Lisa Olivares showed up with groceries for my entire family,"* she recalls. *"I received more than 40 cards from Mary Kay women I'd never even met, spread out across the country. My sister Independent Beauty Consultants took over my datebook and held my skin care classes so they wouldn't have to cancel. They refused to take any profit from the class sales. Other women I had never met came to my mom's memorial service just to support me. It took over a year to go through Mom's house and all of her personal belongings, a huge task. But independent sales force members volunteered their time to help me."*

The year following that awful night at the hospital was a tough one, Lia admits. She brought her 12-year-old brother, Jeremy, home to live with her and her husband, and with no children of their own, the change was at times a difficult adjustment. Again, she credits her Mary Kay business with answers when she needed them. *"I'm so grateful I had the flexibility to set aside time for just Jeremy and me, so we could go through the grieving process together. I was even able to chaperone his*

eighth-grade trip to Washington, D.C. I often think about how my mom will miss important events in my life, such as being a grandmother to my future children and seeing me become an Independent National Sales Director, now my heartfelt goal. But then I look around at the sisterhood of my supportive Independent Sales Directors, and they each have some characteristic of my mom, as if I still have pieces of her through them. While they can never replace her, I'm incredibly blessed to be able to face life with such amazing mentors and friends."

Turning Point

Looking ahead, Lia believes all the Mary Kay nurturing she's received and given is leading to a radiant future even her mom didn't have time to imagine for her. But it took yet another nudge from a family member to bring that future into clear and productive focus. *"One morning last January, my husband and I were talking before leaving for church. As usual, I was chattering on about 'when I earn the use of our Cadillac' and 'when we go on the Top Sales Director Trip' and 'when we do a million.' Cody got very quiet and said gently, 'Lia, you keep saying WHEN I – and THEN I – . When are you going to start saying NOW I – ?' It is one of those vivid moments in your marriage when you aren't sure whether you want to hug your husband or make him sleep on the couch that night! But I knew he was right. I was constantly talking about achieving my goals, but I wasn't doing what it would take to achieve them."*

In another flash of realization, Lia saw that she had been using her mother's death as an excuse for not "going for it." *"Mom always expected me to live a life of excellence,"* she says. *"I made a decision that my Mary Kay business was no longer just about me. I needed to work with excellence for my husband and brother. I needed to fulfill my mom's desire for me to live an amazing life and experience amazing things. It was time to turn my personal tragedy into triumph. I could never move on from losing my mom, but I could move forward."*

Over the following months, Lia's unit completed qualifications that would earn her the use of a Cadillac Career Car. Her unit finished the year in the \$500,000

Circle of Achievement. She hopes to reach the Million-Dollar Circle by age 24 and be a Million-Dollar Sales Director at Seminar 2009.



"It wasn't always easy," she acknowledges. *"As Mom's death anniversary approached last year, I started feeling depressed. Then, unbelievably, my Cadillac arrived exactly two years to the day after her passing. One of my Mary Kay friends called me in tears, insisting that Mom and Mary Kay Ash had obviously met and together persuaded God to deliver such an amazing gift on a particularly tough day."* Lia smiles at the thought. *"Mom always taught me that we choose to be a victor or a victim. She taught me to rise above the circumstances, whatever they are, and to work with passion and purpose. Through my Mary Kay business, I have the opportunity to make the difference in women's lives that she didn't have time to make. Through my Mary Kay business, I can honor my mother's legacy while creating my own."*