

SEATTLE, WA

Blankets to Warm Body and Soul

Affirmagy creates encouragement in fleece form

For Seattle entrepreneur Kristen Marie Schuerlein, business is not just abundant; it's about abundance itself.

Schuerlein is the founder of Affirmagy, a company that produces colorful, cozy fleece blankets—"Affirmawraps"—printed with heartwarming affirmations. Each blanket focuses on a theme, such as love ("I am loved and loving"), serenity ("I live for today") and gratitude ("My eyes twinkle, revealing my grateful heart"). There are smaller wraps for babies, in pink and blue, and even a cuddly yellow one for pets.

"There's something about wrapping people up in joy," says Schuerlein. "It's just a great business to be in."

Schuerlein launched Affirmagy in 2005, after she put together purple "Abundance" blankets and donated them to a group of ministers, asking: "Is this something that touches people's hearts?"

The blankets were a hit, and Affirmagy

has seen steady growth in the two years since, largely thanks to word of mouth. "Person to person has been really amazing," says Schuerlein. "Our average sale is almost three blankets per person." Schuerlein declined to give exact sales numbers, but she says, "We're on a pace to do seven figures this year."

Schuerlein is hardly the first female entrepreneur in her family. Her great-grandmother, a German immigrant, started a meat shop in Cleveland that was passed down to Schuerlein's grandparents. Schuerlein's parents owned a construction company, and she herself has been a businesswoman since she co-founded Design Duo Inc., a graphics and marketing company, in 1996. "I feel very privileged that I live in a time when I can own my own business," Schuerlein says.

Affirmagy is currently offering a special package: its pink "Courage" Affirmawrap and the book *Chicken Soup for the Breast Cancer Survivor's Soul*. From every sale of the bundle, which costs \$39.95, Affirmagy will donate \$7.99 to Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Customers can also buy the bundle and "Pay it Forward"—have it donated anonymously to a woman facing breast cancer. Schuerlein is working with hospitals in Seattle, Florida and elsewhere to take the donations. Her goal is to raise \$400,000 and make gifts of blanket-and-book bundles all over the country.

"To me, as a woman business owner, my company is an expression of who I am, and one of my passions is giving back," Schuerlein says. And the idea of touching hearts and being generous: "To me, it doesn't get any better than that." —Amy Swanson

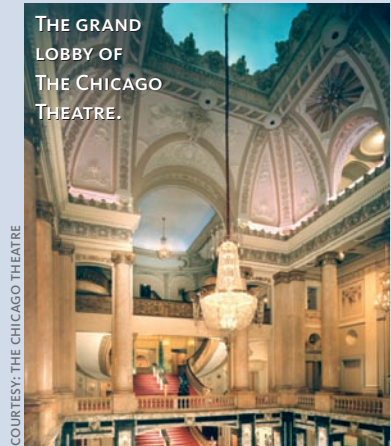


KRISTEN MARIE SCHUERLEIN AND THE "COURAGE" AFFIRMAWRAP.

CHICAGO, IL

A GRAND HALL

Built in 1921, The Chicago Theatre has played host to the biggest names in show business, including John Philip Sousa, Jack Benny, Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, and its marquee is a renowned city icon. Tours are available for visitors, highlighting the theater's architecture and



entertainment history, as well as the history of Chicago. ■ Built in French Baroque style, the theater is seven stories tall, and its auditorium seats more than 3,500. Before entering the theater, visitors can see a miniature replica of the Arc de Triomphe, spanning 60 feet, on the theater's facade. Inside, tour guests will go through the grand lobby, with promenades on the mezzanine and balcony levels and a grand staircase, and an original installation of a Mighty Wurlitzer theater pipe organ. Depending on the production schedule, tours may take visitors backstage, where the autographs of entertainment legends such as Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Julie Andrews can be found on the walls of dressing rooms and corridors. ■ Contemporary performers such as Aretha Franklin, Harry Connick Jr., Norah Jones, Jerry Seinfeld and Margaret Cho continue to make The Chicago Theatre one of the most diverse entertainment venues in downtown Chicago. For more information, call 312-462-6300 or visit www.thechicagotheatre.com.

—Brian Bragdon