

As seen in the News-Herald



Photos by Duncan Scott/DScott@News-Herald.com

Sisters Kelly and Michele McBride began their business, Luna's Light, in honor of their sister, Shannon, who died at age 22. The company features items that help with the grieving process.

Gifts *for those* grieving

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In wake of sister's passing, Kelly and Michele McBride have created line of items to help with the grieving process

Kelly and Michele McBride agreed that late 2003 was a time of emptiness.

By then, they had stopped receiving cards and phone calls regarding the sudden and shocking death of their 22-year-old sister, Shannon, who died from tonsillectomy surgery complications in July of that year.

Months had passed since Shannon's funeral, and the women began feeling like co-workers, friends and others had put a time limit on their grieving process. By Thanksgiving, one friend even seemed surprised that Kelly had not gotten over the death yet.

The sisters soon tired of explaining why some subsequent days weren't as good as others. In fact, they began searching for any commodity that would alert others of their ongoing bereavement.

When they could not find any such product on the market, the duo, who had no previous entrepreneurial experience or intentions, decided to start a business that would sell grieving cards and jewelry in honor of Shannon. They named the company, Luna's Light, after Shannon's nickname.

"It's not that we're trying to change the way people grieve, we just want to let people know that it is OK to grieve," Kelly said. "We think what we're doing needs to be done and it needs to impact society."

Kelly and Michele said the products, sold on their Web site, www.lunaslight.com, were made to purposely circumvent what they believe to be cliché statements of sympathy. Instead, shoppers will find several cards like the one that shows a leaf floating on a pond and reads, "The world has changed forever."

Kelly and Michele, who live in South Euclid and Lyndhurst, respectively, also hope to make an impact with their own design, a universal grieving symbol. They developed it into a pin that grievers should wear on any day they miss a loved one. The symbol is also found on most Luna's Light products.

The symbol was influenced by several images, including a butterfly and a wheat stalk blowing in the wind. The women gave it an ambiguous design, devoid of any religious or cultural connotations, because death and grief mean different things to different people.

They hope the symbol will one day become synonymous with bereavement, much like the pink ribbon is identified with breast cancer. Additionally, they want their products to eliminate the uncertainty and slavishness often associated with gift-giving after a person experiences a loved one's death.

"I'll never forget the night when I was sitting there thinking that I can't believe this is how we tell people we're so sorry for them," Kelly said. "We have all these inventions in the world, and you mean to tell me that there's been nothing more created to share your emotions with someone who definitely needs love?"

With those products now on the market, Kelly and Michele will continue displaying them at upcoming events at St. Paschal Baylon Catholic Church in Highland Heights and Lakeland Community College in Kirtland.

Both Kelly, who has a background in psychology, and Michele, who previously worked in higher education administration, admit the transition into business hasn't always been smooth. They are glad, though, that Luna's light is shining down on them.

"This was a big shift for us," Michele said. "(We are) faced with so many obstacles, with regard to financing, marketing and web development. But Shannon keeps us going when we hit a rocky point."

For more information, call 216-773-1289 or visit www.lunaslight.com