



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Female Entrepreneur Takes Her Enterprise to the Next Level *Institute for Women Entrepreneurs Supports Local Business Growth*

(Santa Ana)—How can a woman remain active in the business world while staying at home with her children? For 42-year-old Tustin resident Wendy Navarro, the solution was launching [online toddler and baby boutique](#) Saige Nicole's.

"After 13 years as an organizational development and training specialist with the Superior Court, I resigned my position to be home with my son and daughter," said Navarro.

However, three years later she wanted to get back to business. So, she and her husband Rick, an IT professional, put a tick list together for an ideal family business. With Navarro's background in retail management, she and her husband agreed that establishing a small, online baby and toddler boutique was ideal. The boutique, named after her now 16-year-old daughter, first went online in 2006.

Over the years, Navarro has developed relationships with a number of [independent designers](#), many of whom are moms who have also gone into business for themselves, and featured them on her site. She is pleased to sell products designed by "moms for moms."

"I started with a handful of vendors and bit by bit added more," said Navarro. Her most popular product line is Right Bank Babies a line of reversible clothing offering eight looks with four separate pieces.

When many small business owners are struggling to keep their businesses afloat, last year Saige Nicole's sales increased 54 percent over the previous year.

"It confirmed what we knew in our hearts—that this was something we could do really well and be profitable," said Navarro.

Navarro attributes her success to keeping focused on her customers. She is always seeking customer feedback through Facebook and Twitter. She finds that people are usually willing to give their opinions on what they want and need for their children.

Opening a brick and mortar store was not a major priority for Navarro, but when she read about the [OC Mart Mix](#) and later visited the location, she was hooked. Located at 3313 Hyland

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Avenue in Costa Mesa, the OC Mart Mix provides independent boutiques an affordable location to showcase their unique merchandise to shoppers and designers. Navarro thought it was a perfect fit for Saige Nicole's, but was it a good business move?

As she had in the past, she turned to the [Institute for Women Entrepreneurs](#) (IWE), an economic development program of Rancho Santiago Community College District, for guidance. The IWE matched her up with business consultant Joe Kibbe with more than 25 years of hands-on fiscal management as a corporate financial professional.

It was Kibbe who guided Navarro through putting her expansion to paper in a business plan. What Navarro really wanted to know was whether opening a brick and mortar space was viable. Once the plan was complete, excitement for an actual store with a door grew because the numbers worked.

Saige Nicole's will open for business at the OC Mart Mix on July 31—just in time to celebrate Navarro's 43rd birthday. The store will be small—200 square feet—but plans are to pack a lot into a little package.

The boutique—both Saige Nicole's online and its soon-to-be brick and mortar counterpart—is truly a family business. Fifteen-year-old son Quentin helps with the website, as does husband Rick, and their six-year-old son Vaughn occasionally models boys clothing for the website. When the store at the OC Mart Mix opens, Saige will work there after school and on weekends.

“We do everything together,” said Navarro, who calls herself “owner and mom in charge.” “It's important for us to provide our children with a head start to understanding business.”

Navarro is grateful that there are resources like the Institute for Women Entrepreneurs to help small business owners like herself. She discovered the IWE about a year ago when she worked with IWE business consultant and social media expert Eydie Stumpf.

“Eydie had great suggestions for Saige Nicole's social media strategies,” said Navarro. “She helped us understand how to interact with customers on a personal level and we got our Facebook likes up to 2,400!”

Navarro's customer outreach also includes pulling together a catalog that showcases how to put her products together into a look, plus regular e-marketing linking customers to the latest find.

“Thanks to the IWE, our business plan really represents Saige Nicole's and helps keep focus on where we want to be in the future,” said Navarro.

About the Institute for Women Entrepreneurs

The Institute for Women Entrepreneurs (IWE), an economic development program of the Rancho Santiago Community College District Foundation, broadens the reach of business training and consulting to help women start, grow and expand their small businesses. The IWE supports local businesses through one-on-one business consulting services, key business workshops geared to the needs of women entrepreneurs and network-building opportunities. While welcoming men to its programs, the IWE caters to the needs of women entrepreneurs. The IWE is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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