

FROM PARENTING PASSION TO PUBLISHER:

How I Grew CharlottesvilleFamily Magazine

By Jennifer Bryerton



When I co-founded CharlottesvilleFamily Magazine in the late 1990s, the internet was still in its infancy. There was no Facebook, no mom blogs, no smart devices at the dinner table—just a real need for trusted, local parenting resources. As a new mom and former educator, I saw how overwhelming early parenting could be and realized families in our area needed more than scattered flyers or secondhand advice. They needed a reliable guide and a real sense of community.

So, we built one.

What began as a simple directory to help parents connect with preschools and playgroups has grown into a comprehensive lifestyle brand.

Over nearly 30 years, CharlottesvilleFamily has evolved to include a robust website, a beloved print magazine, dynamic social platforms, in-person events, and even a mobile app. Through it all, our mission has remained the same: to celebrate local families, spotlight small businesses, and uplift the people doing good work in our community.

And yet, entrepreneurship—especially for women—rarely follows a straight line. Like so many mompreneurs, I've juggled business meetings with ballet recitals, deadlines with dentist appointments, and strategic planning with soccer drop-off. I've made tough calls in quiet moments and found creative solutions in the chaos of family life.



In 2025, I'm proud to be leading CharlottesvilleFamily into its next chapter—this time, fully on my own. Taking the reins as sole owner has challenged me to be braver and bolder. I've invested deeply in new content strategies, print revival, and community-centered initiatives like the Mompreneur Grant and Doing Good Awards, which uplift other local changemakers. In an era when magazines across the country are folding, we are expanding—because our strength lies in the relationships we've built.

That's the difference brand loyalty makes when it's rooted in trust and authenticity.

My training as a teacher—not a publisher or editor—has actually been one of my greatest assets. It's allowed me to think outside the box, to approach publishing with empathy and clarity, and to focus on the value we're delivering to readers, not just pageviews or ad metrics. I've always believed storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we have for building connection. And when we give women and families space to see themselves reflected and celebrated, we strengthen the entire fabric of our communities.

One of the greatest joys of this work is hearing how our content makes a difference—how a mom found her child's preschool through one of our guides, how a local author's book sales surged after being featured, how a small bakery became a community favorite after our spotlight. These stories remind me why I do this.

I'm also fueled by my love of small businesses. I find true delight in hearing the stories of local makers, shopkeepers, and service providers—and in helping them grow through creative marketing. I see every collaboration as a two-way street: when our partners thrive, our community becomes stronger.

To be honest, I've never been driven by scale or status. Success, for me, is measured in connection and contribution. It's in watching my children grow up knowing that hard work, heart, and integrity matter. It's in knowing that CharlottesvilleFamily remains a source of support, joy, and belonging for the families we serve.

Rising doesn't always look like a straight ascent. Sometimes, it's a steady building—of trust, of resilience, of vision. I've grown this business the way I've grown my family: with care, and with deep roots in love.

Connect With Jennifer

www.charlottesvillefamily.com
www.instagram.com/charlottesvillefamily
www.linkedin.com/company/zinnia-communications



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