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INSPIRED BY *nature.*

Although Jannine Barron's Nature's Child store can be visited anytime, thanks to the www, those who visit the actual shopfront are greatly rewarded.

- *Lauren Mitchell*

Located in beautiful Byron Bay, there was perhaps no place more appropriate to establish Australia's first organic baby store.

The NSW seaside hamlet is renowned for the country's highest population of homebirths, it is an Indigenous Birthing Site and attracts many young families who wish to raise their children in its pristine environment.

Jannine and her husband Tom's own boys, Nelson and Harper, are now 14 and 12 and in some ways have grown up alongside the business. Nature's Child celebrated its tenth anniversary this year.

Jannine says her boys inspired her to source and share organic products with others. "After my first son was born it was natural for me to use cloth nappies and was a shock to learn so many people

used disposables which seemed costly and wasteful," she says. "Then when I looked for teething toys, I found them to be all unhealthy, plastic and nylon. One by one, each product I looked for, I was amazed at how unhealthy it all seemed. And this was for babies! So I thought I would start a small business and its just kept growing from there."

Jannine said the advances in organic products since then has been amazing. And she has spent much of her energy educating people about their advantages.

"I spent between 2000 and 2005 writing articles for any magazine that would take them, just getting a conversation going with parents about the environment and nappies," she says. "We were educators more than retailers in those first few years. In 2006, Al Gore premiered his

Film *An Inconvenient Truth* and this truly changed things forever. For the first time, the media and government starting talking about environmental consumerism for the first time and this was a huge lift for our business."

In 2000, *Choice* magazine reported 80 per cent of parents used disposable nappies. By 2009, that figure reduced to 65 per cent. "Our kids are the ones to benefit from this normalisation," Jannine says.

Jannine has many memorable stories of helping parents find an alternative to mainstream baby products. Like the mum who brought her child into the shop, suffering extreme allergies, bright red and crying. "I asked her to remove the baby suit and the disposable nappy and then we rubbed our bottom balm all over the baby's skin. Within minutes, the baby returned to a

NATURE'S CHILD HAS PIONEERED NATURAL PRODUCTS FOR BABIES.

normal colour and stopped crying. This is an extreme example of allergies but I will never forget it. I still get goose bumps over that day."

In 2007 A Current Affair aired a story on the Canadian Government banning BPA in baby bottles as it was potentially harmful and could lead to child cancer. Jannine says parents responded in horror and demanded safe products overnight. "They found Nature's Child was the only parenting website selling BPA-free baby bottles," she says. "For the next two years our bottle sales were through the roof. That all changed about six months ago when safe drinking bottles were finally made available from larger nursery companies. It's a good example of how we were prepared, and the mainstream companies were not."

For Jannine and her family, Nature's Child represents their way of life; a holistic approach to health, food, personal empowerment and the environment. It's why the business encompasses pregnancy retreats as well as the retail aspect. "Taking time out for yourself in pregnancy is vital for a woman," she says. "It is in the quiet space that you connect with yourself and this is the space you tap into when it comes to birth."

For Jannine, maintaining a connection to nature is an integral part of every day,

which usually begins with a run up to the Byron Bay lighthouse to catch the sunrise. When LittleOne Baby calls, it's whale-watching season, which makes the morning ritual even more rewarding. "We live out our philosophy in our workplace and our home life and this inspires us all," she says.

Jannine thanks her customers for the growth in the organics industry, particularly when it comes to cotton. "Our rapid growth annually demonstrates that more and more parents want organic for their babies," she says. "The conventional cultivation of cotton leads to massive environmental and health problems. Around the world, more toxic insecticides are used on cotton than on any other crop. A sustainable alternative is the certified organic cultivation."

Nature's Child primarily stocks certified organic products. "We have a very clear philosophy that we will only use the word organic if it is certified," Jannine says. "That way, the customer will not get confused." And people can rest assured they are providing the best for their child, and the earth.

You can shop at Nature's Child by going to www.natureschild.com.au or call toll free 1300 555 632. Visit the store at 1 Banksia Drive, Byron Bay. ♦



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