



Member Spotlight...Melanie Nelson

Our Spotlight for this issue is on Melanie Nelson. She is the proprietor of [Learning ZoneXpress](#). Learning ZoneXpress develops, publishes, and distributes educational products that promote nutrition and wellness as well as child development, financial literacy, and life management skills.

Melanie went to school at the University of Minnesota to study Family Social Science and received her BS in Education in 1977. Melanie considered herself a late bloomer since she started her first teaching job at age 27. Melanie taught in Owatonna and Medford for thirteen years. She mainly taught at the junior high level. She also taught community education food classes, did catering, and served as a waitress.

Using her background as a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher, she founded Learning ZoneXpress in 1997. According to the [article found in the August/September 2010 issue of 35C Commerce along the I-35 Corridor titled A Healthy Message](#), "Melanie Nelson is a survivor. The Owatonna business owner has overcome obstacles of Biblical proportion – losing her business to fire one year, then four years later taking a major blow when the building she owned flooded, destroying virtually everything – and still built Learning ZoneXpress into one of the top distributors of health, nutrition, and life-skills learning products in the U.S. and world-wide." Melanie started this business targeting Family and Consumer Sciences programs in schools and has since expanded to the fitness market, corporate wellness programs, and food service management companies. She also said that she couldn't operate her business in any other state than Minnesota because of its healthy choices, environment, and great resource people here.

The [October 14, 2010 Star Tribune](#) featured Melanie Nelson as "Owatonna entrepreneur didn't let a few glitches get in the way" article. Learning ZoneXpress also has 1400 items so far. These items are "based on the expertise of a network of home economists, teacher groups, and health specialists Nelson has assembled".

Melanie's family includes Brent, 25 years old, who is an engineer in Portland, Oregon, Bria, 23 years old, who is an aspiring actress in LA, and Noelle who is a broadcast major at Drake University and is now in Istanbul, Turkey, for the semester. Melanie's family also includes her 93 year old mother.

Melanie has received a variety of awards. In 2007 she was recognized by Ernest & Young as a finalist for its prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year award. In 2008 Melanie received the AAFCS Business Entrepreneur of the Year award at the AAFCS Conference in Milwaukee. She received the United Way Never Give Up 2010, Chamber of Commerce for 5% giving back to the community. Her newest award – just received March 23, 2011, is the “keys” to EPES Foundation in Santiago and Concepcion, Chile, for being the most enthusiastic supporter on the planet. (www.epes.cl and www.actionforhelath.org) Melanie indicated she is very proud to support a 29 year old program founded by Owatonna resident, Karen Anderson, which empowers shantytown women to teach health education.

When asked about her interests, Melanie said she loves working at LZE with her team, cross country and alpine skiing, traveling, drinking wine with her girlfriends, biking, and she also has a new guy friend. Her kids are happy and independent, and so is she. Her values are empowerment, freedom and joy and life in abundance, and she “really loves serving FACS teachers! FACS teachers are the best customers and friends on the planet!”

And a very big thank you to Melanie for your continued support of Family and Consumer Sciences. There have been so many times that Melanie has supplied products, advice, and opportunities to Family and Consumer Sciences professionals.

Congratulations Melanie on your new awards and your continued enthusiasm for life.

Alice Lysaker