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This is a story about faith, hope, courage, kindness and positive psychology as a billboard on your body that could change the world.

It all began on November 4, 2006 at **La Prima Taza** coffee shop in Lawrence, Kansas. A professor in a new subfield of psychology was discussing her latest children's book idea with a friend when the eureka moment hit. It wasn't a jolt of caffeine that electrified the synapses of positive psychologist Dr. K.K. O'Byrne. It was a simple idea for a business inspired by, of all things, a t-shirt worn by one of the characters in a children's book she had written.

The t-shirt had the word 'respect' printed on it, and O'Byrne's faithful friend and advisor, Dr. Shane Lopez, had a notion: "He said, 'Wouldn't that be a neat thing to have a product associated with this children's book that had words like love, hope, optimism, creativity, kindness—all those things?'" O'Byrne recalls. "And he said to me, 'K.K., that needs to happen right now.'"

O'Byrne began to ponder the possibilities; this could be bigger than plain t-shirts with random words on it. "When a parent or anyone gives a shirt or some other [piece of] apparel with one of these words on it [to a child]," she said to Lopez, "it is almost as if they are saying to this child, 'Now live what you wear.'" In that instant of serendipity, an enterprise was born.

Thus began the odyssey of a first-time businesswoman in the fickle and fast-moving apparel business. O'Byrne's hope for her one-person enterprise, **Live What You Wear**, was that it would create awareness about people's actions and attitudes and how they affect others. But despite the belief she had in her mission, it took tremendous courage for O'Byrne to jump into something so unknown. If O'Byrne had a signature t-shirt (and she does, see below), it would have 'courage' written all over it.

But there was more to it, beyond just creating a product. "We are in a difficult time in the world right now, no question about it," O'Byrne says. "But we are relatively productive and stable. It's a great time to focus on virtues like hope and good character."

In March 2007, she found a freelance artist, Shirley Harryman, who came up with an original font for the apparel line, which, at least in O'Byrne's head, had grown beyond t-shirts. Additionally, O'Byrne worked with Chad Kaberlein of **Creative Resources Inc.** in Overland Park, Kansas, to better understand the marketing and branding of products like hers. The first 300 or so caps were ready by November 2007.

O'Byrne's 'courage' hat was quickly embraced by people who were facing a health crisis, overcoming an addiction or living with cancer. "I know it sounds kind of hokey, but positive words can create positive energy," O'Byrne says. "What if those words really can change a difficult life or change the world?"

The 'courage' cap sold beyond her wildest dreams, O'Byrne says. And because of its success, she is now plowing forward with an entire line of caps and t-shirts for men, women and children. The new line should be available by mid October through her Web site, livewhatyouwear.com.

"People tell me all the time, 'I can't believe you are going into this apparel business that you know nothing about,'" she says. "Well, I found that it is so much easier to think outside of the box when there is no box to begin with." **CEO**

INNOVATOR WEAR WHAT YOU ARE

STORY BY DAVID HODES



POSITIVE CITATIONS

Dr. K.K. O'Byrne is the founder and CEO of Live What You Wear. She received her doctorate of philosophy, counseling psychology degree with a health psychology emphasis from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2003. From 2003 through 2006, she was an assistant professor of counseling psychology at the University of Kansas. She was an adjunct professor of psychology at UMKC from 2004 through 2006, and she was also a postdoctoral fellow from 2003 through 2006. From 1996 through 2002, she was a graduate teaching/research assistant in the UMKC psychology department.

A positive world can come from a positive word. That's the philosophy of Dr. K.K. O'Byrne.