

NORTHERN LIBERTIES

Business Improvement District

SUBJECT:

All That Glitters: No Libs Small Biz Pivots from Jewelry to Princess Sidewalk Serenades

PHOTOS:

<https://bit.ly/nolibsprincessmedia>

PRESS RELEASE:

ENCHANTED IN NORTHERN LIBERTIES: SMALL BUSINESS PIVOTS DURING COVID FROM JEWELRY AT MAJOR FESTIVALS TO PRINCESS SIDEWALK SERENADES

* On 11/28 and 12/5, look for the Snow Queen at Igloos at Germantown Garden Grill

* On 11/29 and 12/6, look for Adorned by Aisha at Northern Liberties' Holiday Pop-up

Philadelphia, PA - For Aisha Maria Loeks in Northern Liberties, 2020 was set to be a banner year for the record books. Her Adorned by Aisha business was set to sparkle at Philadelphia's major festivals like Philadelphia Flower Show and Christmas Village. Her second business, A Dash of Magic Events, was her back-up sideline business that brought joy to kids at birthday parties and special events across the region. Then, the pandemic hit, and shut-down orders came and cancelled major events and parties, as well as in-person jewelry retail opportunities. Loeks quickly waved her magic wand and shifted gears to survive the new normal. From the sparkle of her main occupation as a jewelry maker, to a major pivot to launch virtual princess meet and greets to socially-distanced princess sidewalk serenades, Loeks is making all that glitters into gold for the final weeks of the year. The Northern Liberties resident will pop-up on Saturdays and Sundays during the Northern Liberties Holiday Pop-up Shops. On Saturdays, November 28th and December 5th, look for A Dash of Magic Events at a new Frozen-inspired event, as she brings the Snow Queen to the Igloos at Germantown Garden Grill with seatings at 11:00am and 1:00pm. On Sundays, November 29th and December 6th, look for Adorned by Aisha on the 700 block of N 2nd St to bring vintage inspired jewelry to Northern Liberties Holiday Pop-up Shops from 1:00pm to 6:00pm .

For one of Philadelphia's biggest Disney and princess fans, this major pivot might sound like a fairy tale out of a cartoon movie. But it's a story that saw a turbulent few months and a tremendous loss of income where her livelihood was in jeopardy, and health and safety is now a constant concern. She also faces the same challenges other businesses face, as she has to constantly adapt her work to the current government guidelines and shut-down orders. But for this local survivor, it's not a question of survival but more a question of when will all this be over, and when will the fairy-tale ending come.

A DASH OF MAGIC EVENTS

Aisha Maria Loeks, 32, was born in Sante Fe, NM. She currently resides and operates her businesses out of Northern Liberties. Loeks comes from a long line of handicraft makers.. Her grandma quilted and made dolls, her great grandma was a tailor and dressmaker, and her mom was a knitter. She started sewing at a very young age. Halloween was always her favorite holiday because she could be anything she wanted. She said, "If I had my way, there would be Halloween all year round."

Loeks did musical theater all through Jr High and High School and then went on to study theater and costume design. She received her BFA in technical theater from Santa Fe University of Art and Design. It was there she learned to act, sing, make props, design costumes, and so much more.

In 2017, A Dash of Magic Events was born. She said, "I always had a love of princesses and fictional books about fairytale worlds, and I loved to dress up in costumes and put on little plays. And I love mermaids especially!" She started to use her education and skills, and her love of costumes and performing to create beautiful princess experiences. She brought these to life by volunteering as a princess for CHOP, Ronald McDonald House, The Salvation Army and other non-profits. After she kept getting requests from parents and the community, she started her own company.

Today, A Dash of Magic Events is a high-end themed party and events company that went from her secondary business to her primary source of income during the pandemic. The company specializes in bringing the highest quality story-book and fantasy characters to parties and events. Loeks focuses on quality in everything she does, including the best, most realistic made gowns and wigs, professional character make-up, and professionally trained actors. She personally hand-makes most of her costumes.

"Imagine the look on your little one's face when they see their favorite character step into their own space and their own home," said Loeks. "When they look up at their birthday party and flash their big eyes and smile, that is what does it for me each and every time. I am so honored to be able to help make their dreams come true - and it's all about bringing joy and light into their lives. During the COVID crisis, I wasn't going to let that joy be taken away. It wasn't a question of would I keep doing this, but instead was a question about how could I pivot and do it an entirely new way."

For more about A Dash of Magic Events, visit www.adashofmagicevents.com.

PRINCESS PIVOT

Prior to the pandemic, this included special events, corporate events, birthday parties, festivals, fairs, non-profit fundraisers and so much more. During the pandemic, Loeks had to adjust and create a new model that included her new and most popular service, Princess Sidewalk Serenades, Virtual Princess Meet and Greets, as well as socially-distanced Princess appearances at small outdoor events when local restrictions permit.

Loeks said, "This pandemic has been tough for so many people, and for me personally with both of my small businesses being impacted. With A Dash of Magic Events, it was parties and events being canceled, and movie theaters closing (I was doing premier openings). But within one week of the shut down, I pivoted and got online bookings running ASAP. In late March, I was already offering weekly princess virtual sessions on a pay what you can basis. Because I

understood we were all in this together, and all these changes were especially tough on the kids, these virtual events were really popular! In June, people grew tired of virtual events and the weather was nicer, so I expanded and got out of the box. We got permission to start to do events again, and that's when my socially-distanced sidewalk and stoop serenades were born. I would book 5 minute little pop-bys, neighborhood by neighborhood, so that parents could book a quick visit with a character for their kiddos. Then as restrictions lightened again, I started doing birthday parties and events again - but all socially distanced and all outdoors.”

Ways Loeks adjusted included creating COVID-friendly princess masks that matched each of her magical costumes, adjusting rules around photos and social distancing, re-shaping her packages to adjust for smaller audiences and different minimum time requirements. She developed week-day discounts and new packages for families to give flexibility. She added, “We are all in this together, and I wanted to make my services affordable for people affected the most by the pandemic.” She also continues to run her non-profit branch, and volunteer her time when she can even during the pandemic. She continues to volunteer during the pandemic by doing free virtual storytimes for a few local non profits, including the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald house.

ABOUT THE JEWELRY BUSINESS:

The Adorned collection is the creation of artisan and designer Aisha Maria Loeks. As listed above, Loeks was raised in a culture of handicraft, just as generations of women in her family before her. Through apprenticeships and extensive study in the Fine Arts, Aisha honed her craft, graduating Cum Honore from the Santa Fe University of Art and Design. With fond memories of her grandmother’s cameos and a romanticized view of what the world was like at the turn of the century, Loeks began to create her vintage inspired jewelry and accessories line.

“When my grandmother passed away I got all her costume jewelry,” said Loeks. “I cherished it so much and it became a big part of the inspiration for my own jewelry line. Everything has a vintage feel to it. Also with my love of make-believe and fairytales, you can see that translate into the jewelry as well. I have many pieces that are very fantasy based. It's all so whimsical, romantic, vintage, fantastical, cottagecore and more. I have different collections - including vintage inspired, nature inspired and imagination inspired.”

Adorned by Aisha was Loeks’ first business that dates back to 2011. Her studio is in Northern Liberties, where she is an active member business of the Northern Liberties Business Improvement District. She has grown over the years and has a strong presence in craft shows, makers’ events and large scale festivals, like Philadelphia Flower Show and Christmas Village. As her business grew, she added employees, and you would see Adorned by Aisha at multiple events on the same weekend across the region. Loeks then expanded to sell wholesale to boutiques across the city and country. She also sells on her website and on Etsy.

With the pandemic, all the craft shows and festivals for 2020 were cancelled - and Loeks lost a huge chunk of her income. Boutiques also were closed down and many still are - which meant wholesale orders stopped coming in for the small business.

Loeks said, “I still got some online sales here or there, and I count my blessings and say thank you for every online order I have received. But it is not the same as the income I earned from physical craft shows.”

On top of pivoting by switching gears to A Dash of Magic Events, Loeks pivoted Adorned by Aisha by working hard to transition to online commerce, switching platforms, migrating her store to a more sophisticated ecommerce platform, and expanding her online offerings. She also has been teaching herself and learning Google Ads for business. She is offering free shipping and launching new marketing efforts to keep people engaged and interested - as she sees her online business steadily build. But until in-person opportunities for festivals, fairs and large-scale events, she is making due the best she can and focusing tons of new energy into A Dash of Magic Events. For more about Adorned by Aisha, visit www.adornedbyaisha.com.

ENCHANTED IN NORTHERN LIBERTIES: THE EVENT

Germantown Garden Grill (1029 Germantown Ave) and Glu Hospitality are proud to host A Dash of Magic Events for the first-ever Enchanted in Northern Liberties: Snow Queen Brunch at the Igloos. Families are invited to get frozen at the Igloos at one of Philadelphia's largest outdoor restaurants on the deck of the former Vesper Day Club and Pool. This special open-air dining experience is perfect for kids of all ages that love Elsa and Disney. This socially-distanced positive and magical dining experience will include 90 minutes at a private, exclusive and heated igloo just for you and your immediate family members. Get ready to enjoy a safe and socially-distanced photo opportunity, songs from the princesses story and grand entrance. Each reservation will also receive a private Snow Queen visit per each Igloo, a souvenir, and frozen themed activity sheets. Don't forget to come hungry for brunch and lunch, plus hot beverages for kids and adults. This event is part of the Northern Liberties Holiday Pop-up and pairs two small businesses together to support each other during the pandemic.

Enchanted in Northern Liberties: Snow Queen Brunch at the Igloos will take place on Saturday, November 28th on Small Business Saturday and on Saturday, December 5th, with seatings each day at 11:00am and 1:00pm. Tickets are \$15.00 per person for Igloo seating and \$10.00 per person for outdoor seating without the Igloo. Each ticket includes a socially-distanced photo opportunity at check-in, a private Snow Queen experience (song, story or question/answer), a frozen themed activity and coloring sheets, and a souvenir per child. Food and drink is pay as you go and separate. A portion of each ticket will go to charity, and provide a free princess appearance for children in need through the Salvation Army.

This event is open to a very limited number of tickets to make this dining experience very safe and intimate. Capacity for this event will be at less 10% of the entire capacity for the venue, to ensure safety and health protocols. All children and adults above the age of two must wear a mask to and from their dining table. The Snow Queen already has her special princess themed matching mask. She can't wait to see your costumes and masks too! Costumes for the little ones are encouraged but not required. All families attending must follow the local and health guidelines at the time of the event. If the event is postponed due to weather, all parties will be able to transfer their ticket to a new date and time.

Tickets are on sale now at www.germantowngarden.com.

NORTHERN LIBERTIES HOLIDAY POP-UP SHOPS

Adorned by Aisha will be part of the new event below in Northern Liberties Business Improvement District on Sundays, November 29th and December 6th, from 1:00pm to 6:00pm, outside 720 North 2nd Street. Full event details are found below:

Northern Liberties Business Improvement District kicks off the holiday season with the debut of Northern Liberties Holiday Pop-up, starting on Black Friday for two weekends, November 27th-29th and December 3rd-6th, from 1:00pm to 6:00pm. This brand-new socially-distanced holiday shopping event will feature 15+ small local businesses and makers from around the Philadelphia region popping up with gifts, decor, fashions, treats and more in eight retail locations along N. 2nd Street. From French Toast Bites, to Christmas trees and ornaments, bridal wear to baguettes, there will be something for everyone on Santa's holiday shopping list. While visiting, shoppers are invited to make a day of it in Northern Liberties by enjoying a meal, hot beverage, baked good or Christmas cocktail at one of the District's dozens of restaurants, bakeries and cafes. The District's existing favorite retail shops will also be ready with gifts for all ages. For participating locations, look for the festive framed signs and posters. For a full list of vendors, dates and locations, visit explorenorthernliberties.org.

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