



Start It Up



A look into the unique, dynamic community of Shanghai entrepreneurs. *By Jennifer Stevens*

Whether it's a job transfer, the opportunity to join a startup company or the willingness to follow a significant other across the globe, Shanghai continues to lure expats for a variety of reasons. As a result, the city has become a veritable melting pot of cultures and interests: an Eastern version of New York City - perhaps the real "Land of Opportunity."

But what really separates Shanghai from a city like Manhattan, apart from the time difference, are the gaps in the marketplace - allowing engineers to leave their factories and

profit from their passions instead, transforming trailing spouses into handicraft business owners and turning advertising executives into gourmet trailblazers.

Many times, these people fall into the category of "accidental entrepreneurs," starting a life and career they never thought they'd have. How does this happen, and how do their lives change as a result? To better understand this growing trend and get a feel for the entrepreneurial spirit of Shanghai, we tracked down six of the city's thriving business owners to tell their stories.

Mike Sherretz

My Homebrew Store
WeChat ID: Mike-Homebrew



Mike Sherretz, a 60-year-old entrepreneur and Shanghai expat since 2000, remembers a saying he heard when he first moved to China: "Anything is possible here, or impossible. It just depends on how you go about it." Originally brought to Tianjin to produce automotive and industrial coatings in the '90s, the chemical engineer has worn many hats since moving to the country. But it wasn't until his wife, a director at GE (also based in China), encouraged him to leave the corporate world and open a business together, that things really started coming into focus.

"We identified that there was a big gap in what people had available to help them manage a successful work life and a good home life," says Sherretz. "We saw that as an opportunity

and are trying to fill that gap." As a result, Leaderstyles International, a leadership and lifestyle skill management business, was born in 2008. Together, Sherretz and his wife (the CEO of Leaderstyles) offer all sorts of services, from business simulations for Fortune 500 companies to coaching executives on management skills – even a youth program aimed at teaching teens about self-awareness and team collaboration.

Soon after, Sherretz began seeing other gaps in the marketplace, including the ability to purchase ingredients and equipment to make beer and wine at home. Thus, My Homebrew Store came about in 2009. What Sherretz refers to as the lifestyle part of the business, My Homebrew Store not only offers cus-



In general, the climate for owning your own business is alive and growing here.

tomers a "gourmet beer kit," but also beer-brewing and winemaking classes. "A few [of my students] have already opened their own craft beer bars that are becoming quite successful," he says.

Sherretz refers to this budding community of brewers as a "real self-help group" for one another, and he is quite happy to help other beer enthusiasts by sharing recipes and expertise. "In general, the climate for owning your own business is alive and growing here," he says. "To be successful, though, you have to have that driving passion to keep going, not lots of money."

Sherretz is clearly passionate about what he does; however, he's on the fence about whether or not to

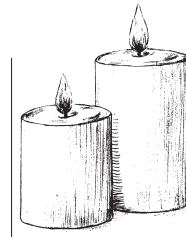
expand his own business. "I have resisted the urge to open a storefront, since that requires extra expense and employees and turns a passion and hobby into another job," he explains. Instead, he'd rather save time to share this and other hobbies with his family; he taught his 11-year-old son to brew root beer, helps coach his American football team and loves to sail with his son as helmsman. "I am sometimes called 'The Renaissance Man' by my friends and customers because I am involved in so many things," Sherretz says.

Other business owners in Shanghai agree that they are merely doing what they are passionate about. For example, 41-year-old candle maker Heather Neufeldt says that for her, "it's more about sharing something than making money."

This mentality comes from the fact that, like Sherretz, Neufeldt sees her company, Re-Kindled Candles, as an opportunity to fill a gap and offer a product that will make people happy. "When I moved here [in 2010], I was buying so many IKEA candles and going through them so quickly that I had to repaint my walls because of the smoke stains," she says. Despite the constant candle burning, however, Neufeldt jokes that no amount of fragrance could mask the smell of fried food from her neighbor's kitchen. "My kids kept thinking I had McDonald's in the house," she says.

As a solution, Neufeldt began searching Taobao for longer-burning soy wax. When her husband went back to the States for business trips, she would request that he return with scented candles and eco-friendly wicks. Soon, a double boiler and two electric hot plates made an appearance in their living room, and Re-Kindled Candles was on its way.

"At the beginning, I gave away more candles than I sold," Neufeldt recalls.



It's more about sharing something than making money.

In fact, the business didn't truly kick off until October 2014, when a friend asked her to make candles for a charity gala to support Shining Star, a foster home for blind and partially sighted orphans in Shanghai.

In addition to donating candles to Shining Star, Heather also donated 300 candles to her 12-year-old daughter's charity, Comfort for Cancer. As a burgeoning entrepreneur herself, Karina Neufeldt started the organization after her grandmother passed away from breast cancer two years ago. As part of the grieving process, she began going through the assortment of scarves collected dur-

ing chemotherapy, boxing them up (each with a "caring card") and sending them to a cancer center.

Heather's other daughter, 10-year-old Kiera, was the inspiration for the backwards "K" in "Re-Kindled Candles," as an homage to the dyslexia they both share. "It's to let Kiera, and all the other circles out there, know that living in a square world can work out," Heather explains.

This positivity and encouragement is felt not only within her family but also within the larger creative entrepreneurial community as a whole. "I was accepted right out of the gate,"



Heather Neufeldt

Re-Kindled Candles
rekindled-candles.com

cover story

she says. "Especially at the markets; everyone is super supportive."

And it's not just the artisanal and handicraft entrepreneurs that are so supportive, but also the large group of food and beverage (F&B) industrialists. Camden Hauge, the 27-year-old owner of EGG restaurant and founder of Shanghai Supperclub attests to this, saying, "I thought I'd be fighting for people's affections [when I launched]. Instead, people understand the struggle and are collaborative instead of competitive. People have been so lovely."

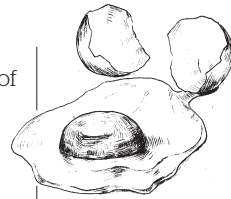
The New Jersey native first came to Shanghai in 2012 via London with her company, Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency. Not expecting to stay longer than three to six months, she instead fell in love with the city – mostly due to the people she met here. "I loved how [they] made time for their own pet projects," she says. "The UK had drained me, and others,

of the ability to dive into [our] passions. People seemed to have more of a balance here."

A year into her Shanghai career, Hauge decided to make time for her own pet project, Shanghai Supperclub, a monthly dinner party aimed at gathering a variety of social circles and blurring the lines through food. "I had always wanted to be in F&B, and this was my way of tip-toeing into that direction," she explains.

But she didn't stop there. The success of Shanghai Supperclub gave her the confidence and know-how to draw up a business plan for her own restaurant: EGG, a café inspired by the Aussie-owned coffee shops she used to frequent in London.

"EGG is quickly becoming the 'third place' for many people in Shanghai," says Camden's brother, Michael Hauge. A fellow entrepreneur, he explains that the desire for a comfort-



People understand the struggle and are collaborative instead of competitive.

able place to spend time outside of home and work is important, and his sister is providing that place – filling yet another gap in the market.

"You have to be a crazy person to go into F&B," Michael warns. But he insists that Camden loves it. "She's not only a restaurant owner – she's a hostess," he says. "She talks to everyone, makes sure everybody's happy."

Meanwhile, Michael (25) started his own business in October 2014; an educational company, LearningLeaders aims to help young adults (grades 5-12) increase their critical thinking skills through public speaking, debate and storytelling. "International education is pretty exciting," he says. "The world, in a sense, is now flatter, as students all over the world are hearing about opportunities. We're helping these students develop the ability to express themselves in order to solve problems." In a little over a year, Michael has added nine other team members and grown the student population from 22 at the outset to a whopping 200, in addition to providing speech-writing services to corporations.

Michael and Camden, sibling entrepreneurs, are supportive of each other and admire what the other is doing. "Our father was a teacher," says Camden. "It's so nice to see Michael carrying on the tradition and appreciation for education – the same level of education that we were fortunate enough to have growing up."

Despite their success in their respective fields thus far, the siblings don't



Camden & Michael Hauge

EGG
12 Xiangyang Bei Lu
(near Changle Lu)
Shanghai Supperclub
shsupperclub.com

LearningLeaders Debate Academy
www.learnandleadforlife.com



Heather Turner

CinnaSwirl
32 Yuyuan Dong Lu (near Changde Lu)
cinnaswirlchina.com

homestay with a family in Huangshan) and still laugh when they think about the Angry Birds pajama set Michael bought Camden as a present. "It was so thick that Camden couldn't raise her arms above her head," Michael laughs. "I looked like a starfish," Camden jokes.

The challenge of finding enough time to spend with family seems to be a concern for most Shanghai entrepreneurs, but the struggle becomes even greater when four children are thrown into the mix. In fact, 33-year-old Heather Turner jokingly refers to her business, CinnaSwirl, as her "fifth child." Meanwhile, she describes her four real children – ages eight, six, four and 18 months – as her "taste testers."

Turner moved here five-and-a-half years ago with her husband, Jared Turner. He had an opportunity to join a startup, and she worked as a dental hygienist. After bouncing around among several companies, Jared eventually started a publishing company, and Heather began to feel the need to chip in.

"I had a lot of ideas," she says. "But food has always been my passion." Heather saw herself possibly teaching cooking classes, but fate had other plans. She posted a recipe for cinnamon rolls on the Shanghai Mamas forum and was soon flooded with requests. As it turned out, moms didn't want to make the recipe – they wanted the recipe made for them.

"I started baking [the cinnamon rolls] in my toaster oven, and my husband would deliver them on his electric bike," recalls Heather. News spread quickly about the baking delivery service, and the couple opened an online shop in October 2012 to keep up with demand. "I remember being

see themselves as business tycoons by any means. "I feel uncertain about the word entrepreneur," Camden says. "I don't think F&B is entrepreneurship. The word seems too glorified, at least to me. I'm just doing what I'm passionate about. I have a purpose." Michael agrees with his sister and similarly refers to himself as a "businessperson" instead of an entrepreneur. "I'm able to make people's lives better, and they're happy to pay me," he says.

This humility is arguably what makes the Hauge siblings successful – that, and their work ethic. Some days, Camden puts in more than 17 hours of work (7am-12:30am) if a private dinner is scheduled. Michael regularly works until 8:30pm, and



I remember being eight months pregnant, rolling out dough for cinnamon rolls in the kitchen, trying to fill 88 boxes.

still doesn't think it's enough. Finding time for a social life is a struggle, they admit, but they make it work. Camden's boyfriend works in the F&B industry as well, so they make a point to collaborate. Michael plans a "date night" every Tuesday. But even so, Camden admits that they're "like ships that pass in the night."

The Hagues also admit that they'd like to see each other more, and they reminisce about a time when things were slightly less hectic. "When Michael came to Shanghai, he moved into my apartment," Camden remembers. "It was close to Christmas, and we hadn't spent more than a week together in over 10 years." The two bonded over China stories (Michael had recently finished a seven-month

cover story

Monica Muriel

Zurita

247-7 Wulumuqi Zhong Lu
(near Wuyuan Lu)
www.zurita-design.com



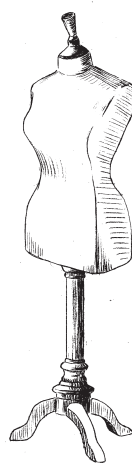
Muriel moved to Shanghai eight years ago with her husband for the purpose of starting a business. The decision came about while talking to her husband's uncle. She remembers him saying, "If I was your age, I'd go to China." And that's all it took. "We were very spontaneous," she says. "We thought, if we don't like it, we will learn something, at least."

Needless to say, they've learned quite a lot from their time here. But after five years of working for internet start-ups, Muriel was becoming burned out. "I thought, 'If I stay [here], I have to do something I'm passionate about,'" she says. She began working for a fashion company to better understand the ins and outs of the business and put her years of sketching and creativity to use. Soon after, the idea to start Zurita, an eco-friendly fashion boutique, was conceived.

"It was important for me to use natural, environmentally friendly fabrics and materials," says Muriel. "In my eight years [in Shanghai], it's always been a polluted city, but two years ago it went through the roof - our baby spent the night crying - and it started hitting us. We need to do our part to change it."

And she is. Inside her new storefront - opened in September 2015 - original bamboo, natural silk and cashmere garments line the walls. She hopes that by using sustainable fabrics in her designs, she will not only help the environment, but also make other women feel better about themselves, thereby setting a positive example for her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Olivia. "I bring [Olivia] to the store sometimes," says Muriel. "She walks around in high heels, greeting customers."

It sounds like we have yet another entrepreneur in the making. **SE**



It was important for me to use natural, environmentally friendly fabrics and materials.

eight months pregnant, rolling out dough for cinnamon rolls in the kitchen, trying to fill 88 boxes," she says. "I was exhausted."

Two years later, in November 2014, the Turners finally opened a storefront on Yuyuan Dong Lu in hopes of finding a better work-family balance. "Now, if I get an order for 88 boxes, at least I can get my ayi to spend the night, and I can bake at the store. It's more efficient, but still a lot of work," says Heather.

And the work doesn't seem to be slowing down. The small shop is always packed, and Heather is finding that much of the business comes from repeat customers - maybe because the cinnamon rolls taste just like what your mother or grandmother made when you were little.

"It's a family recipe," Heather explains. "When I was eight or nine, my mom wanted to go back to school, but before she went, she gave us [kids] cooking classes. We each had one night a week." Heather remembers these weekly sessions fondly and attributes her love of cooking and baking to starting at a young age.

In fact, plenty of entrepreneurs find their passion during adolescence, and this is certainly the case for Monica Muriel, 33-year-old owner of the clothing brand Zurita. "I have sketched since I was a kid," Muriel recalls. "My grandma was a seamstress, and I remember giving her dress designs. She [often] told me that she couldn't make the sketches. They needed to be much more complex. I was a dreamer."