

## **Decorating dreams turn to party themes for Party Haven**

“We started with a dollar and a dream.”

Now thanks to their own drive, creativity and the support of the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre and the provincially funded Starter Company program, Crystal Smith and Jillian Jayavel are just a few months away from officially launching their business, Party Haven.

Party Haven is focused on developing fun and sophisticated party themes, packaged up as a comprehensive kit that includes handmade quality decorations, invitations and tableware. Their kits are ideal for the busy mom or hostess that wants to take their party to the next level without the hassle of imagining and creating decorations.

“We want every event to be a charming, memorable experience that allows guests to escape from the ordinary,” says Crystal. “We enjoyed doing this for family and friends – and I have a big family – and we finally decided to turn our passion into a business.”

They searched online for sources of funding for their new ambition, and approached the Starter Company program with little more than an idea. “The Starter Company process really helped us focus our business, understand the marketing and financial parts,” says Crystal.

“And we revised our business plan three or four times over the course of the program,” adds Jillian. “The value was far more than just the grant money. We learned so much, made great contacts, and had great mentoring. The whole experience was invaluable.”

They were able to tap into other business support programs offered through the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre, including a workshop on selling on Etsy – the very popular online marketplace for handmade arts and crafts. The knowledge gained through the workshop cemented their reasons to use Etsy as a selling platform. An Etsy store will allow them to sell their themed party kits directly to their target market.

On June 7, at a Brampton Entrepreneur Centre marketing event, Jillian and Crystal were presented with a cheque for \$5,000 in start-up funding for completing the Starter Company program. It was part of a total of \$45,000 in grant money given to nine Brampton entrepreneurs at the same event.

So far Party Haven has developed 20 party themes in three categories, including children’s parties, baby showers and bridal showers. Their customizable designs range from the whimsical to the elegant, including a “Jungle Safari” baby shower theme and a “Fairy Tale” birthday party.

Autumn of 2016 is the target date for launching their website and the Etsy store. And they have big plans for the future. They plan to acquire a multi-purpose facility in Brampton that they could use to house inventory, host parties on site, and offer crafting workshops. They’re also considering ways to combine Crystal’s work experience in the mental health field with their party passion to possibly develop some art therapy programming.

“We’re very community minded,” says Jillian. “We both grew up in Brampton. And then to have the support we received from the city to help bring our dreams to life – we feel inspired to give back to our community.”

For now, they’re focused on the launch. Thanks to the funding, their Party Haven vision is almost a reality. “We want to create themes that inspire, and memories that last,” says Crystal.

The Starter Company program is funded through the Province of Ontario’s Youth Jobs Strategy, and delivered through regional or municipal offices like the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre. It’s one of the many resources entrepreneurs with plans to launch or grow a business can tap into.

The Brampton Entrepreneur Centre runs events throughout the year to support business and connect entrepreneurs. They also offer individual consultations and advice, and are the access point for funding and programs to support start-up and established businesses. Go to [Brampton.ca/bec](http://Brampton.ca/bec) for more information.