

MARIA LUISA WHITTINGHAM

Lending her expertise...

*It's not luck that
has kept her in business.*



Maria Luisa Whittingham, the owner and founder of Maria Luisa Boutique and ML by Maria Luisa in Nyack, is able to look back on a business that first opened its doors in 1987.

It's not luck that has kept her in business, one devoted to an ever-evolving selection of women's fashions and accessories, home décor and gifts, for nearly 30 years.

With a background in fashion, a world perspective and plenty of hard work, Whittingham has carved out her place in the Rockland County retail scene (...and been recognized numerous times over the years by a variety of local organizations).

Along the way, she has also learned quite a bit, made countless contacts and yes, had her share of challenges to overcome.



Today, as she continues to fine-tune her two brick-and-mortar locations - side-by-side boutiques in a vibrant, artistic Hudson River community - she has her eye always on the future.

Embracing online shopping, social media and as she has from the start, staying strong in her commitment to her local community, Whittingham continues to find a way to thrive.

Now, she's ready to share her story and her expertise - offering a hand to those just starting out, or brainstorming with those at a crossroads. She has the knowledge to share - and the desire to do just that.



Contact Whittingham
at (845) 664-8492
or email

YourSmallBizMatters@gmail.com
to schedule a consultation,
speaking engagement
or create a workshop.



Maria Luisa
est. 1987

77 South Broadway
Nyack, NY 10960
(845) 353-4122

www.marialuisaboutique.com



We Remain Strong in Our Commitment to MLGL and Stand Proudly Behind Its Inaugural Year's Success.



77 South Broadway
Nyack, NY 10960

845 353 4122
www.marialuisaboutique.com

Opportunity

We have realized some very concrete results from the MLGL initiative already and are excited about our ongoing partnership with the Rockland Community Foundation, a charitable organization committed to building a better Rockland County. We were particularly proud to achieve a long-held dream, creating an annual Scholarship Fund and being able to recognize its first recipient, a need-based young woman graduating from a Rockland County high school.

Through MLGL we also remain committed to community partnerships as we continue to serve our customers with both integrity and great products.

To that end, as we have since the launch of the MLGL initiative, 10% of your MariaLuisaBoutique.com purchases will go to one of the local organizations we support – and you designate – the Nyack Center, People to People, VCS Pride or the ML by Maria Luisa Scholarship Fund.



Taking Initiative

At Maria Luisa Boutique and ML by Maria Luisa, we are always striving to do more.

We have proudly supported a number of local nonprofits and causes in our nearly 30 years in business. Our efforts have supported programs related to equality, education, the arts, social justice, ecology and more.



Recent success has come with our "Say NO! To the Bag" campaign, which discourages the

single-use of plastic bags. We support reusable bags and reward our customers who bring their own.



We also offer creative workshops to explore not only ourselves but those around us.

We encourage creativity even further hosting visual and performing arts events. And, we are known to lend our efforts to local fundraisers throughout the year.

Our Mission

MLGL is about giving back to our local community through our unique program that enables us to help raise funds for our local nonprofits and initiatives through our unwavering support of the ever-growing market for fine handmade, Fair Trade and eco-minded goods produced both here in America and around the world.

We continue to re-use, up-cycle and seek sustainability in all of our practices and through our vendor relationships. Our support of these sources, particularly with women-owned and small businesses, assists them in both thriving financially and continuing to offer the unique, meaningful products we are pleased to bring you.



Ongoing Commitment to Community



Through our efforts, we strive to make our community ever stronger, building on our longstanding connections through ongoing dialogue, new partnerships, exhibitions, special events and related opportunities where we can come together to both explore topical issues and support local endeavors.

Underlying all we do is our vision to increase awareness of the global community and the links we share, no matter where we are on this Earth. We seek to promote ways of living and working together mindfully, always caring for – and taking care of – our surroundings. Recognizing this common ground allows us to band together in ways that benefit all.

Hudson Valley

Women in Business



The Designer

Boutique owner and community activist Maria Whittingham's formula for entrepreneurial success combines fearlessness, talent, and a staunch work ethic

BY MARY FORSELL AND DALE MCKNIGHT



The personal touch: "People still like to browse for unique things they won't find anywhere else," says Whittingham

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN GABRIELSEN

Maria Whittingham, owner of **Maria Luisa Boutique** and **ML by Maria Luisa**, which has two Nyack locations, credits her family with playing a key role in the shaping of her career path. Born in the South Bronx, Whittingham was three years old when she moved with her family back to her parents' homeland of Puerto Rico. "My family always worked hard," Whittingham says. "My father was an orphan, and my mother lost her own mother when she was only about 13; she had to quit school to get a job and help support the family."

By the time Whittingham's mother was 17, she was managing a general store in Puerto Rico. "She was also a dressmaker," Whittingham recalls. "Of her three daughters, I was most interested in that and started learning to make clothes myself."

Her family moved back to New York when she was 10. After high school, Whittingham attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, where she majored in design, then began working for a business that provided garment samples for companies like Anne Klein Studio.

During that time, Whittingham became friends with a young designer, Narciso Rodriguez, who remained a steadfast supporter. (Rodriguez later became known for creating the wedding dress worn by Carolyn Bessette when she married John F. Kennedy Jr. in 1996.)

After working in design and production in the garment industry for several years — and following marriage, the birth of a son, and a move to Rockland County — Whittingham was faced with a sudden health scare. "It was the first time I realized you don't automatically have a guarantee that you're going to grow old. It really turned me around," she says.

Fortunately, the health scare was resolved, but it inspired Whittingham to take a leap by opening her own business. In 1987, she launched the Maria Luisa Boutique in a 400-square-foot space downstairs in Nyack's YMCA building. The store featured designer clothing, shoes, toys, "and I carried hand-painted T-shirts made by Narciso Rodriguez. He was so supportive when I began the business," she says. Whittingham later moved the shop to its current South Broadway location.

By then, raising her son as a single mom, she focused on expanding the store and creating a one-of-a-kind shopping experience. In 2007, she opened a second shop, ML by Maria Luisa. Her brick-and-mortar stores and online shop offer a variety of handmade, eco-friendly items made in the US and around the world. "I can usually tell customers exactly where an item has come from; we focus on a lot of fair-trade items."

Maria, who lives in Upper Nyack, has served in organizations ranging from the local chamber of commerce to the NAACP. She's received community and business awards and was named the 2014 Rockland County Entrepreneur and Community Activist of the Year by Nyack College. Last year, Maria started a scholarship fund. "It's for a female high-school student in the Rockland County area," she explains. "The first winner went on to music school, and I was so pleased to be a part of it."