

# Charmed Memories: Turning grief into cherished keepsakes

By Kyla Woodard  
For Clay Today

MIDDLEBURG — When Dezaree Sargent's daughter cut her hair for the first time, Dezaree wanted to find a way to savor the fresh cut and make the memory last forever.

"Instead of just throwing it in the drawer, I was like, 'Oh, maybe I could just make a necklace or something.' So, I did, and it turned out cool," Dezaree said.

With the creation of that simple necklace, Dezaree's idea catapulted into a business built on the same concept: remembering things we have loved — and maybe lost.

"I just started asking people if they would be interested, and it just went from there," Dezaree said.

Dezaree owns the local business Charmed Memories and makes it her mission to preserve special memories for customers to cherish forever.

Charmed Memories is a hand-made cremation jewelry business that began back in 2016. Working with remains of all sorts, Dezaree spends her days intertwined with the personal treasures of others.

The company specializes in memorial jewelry in rings, pendants, glass beads and necklaces. The personal material she can put into jewelry ranges from cremation remains and hair, teeth, breast milk and even fabric fibers.

"I've gotten many people say they were in tears because it was so meaningful to have something they could wear with them every day. That is part of the person they lost or the pet they've lost," Dezaree said.

At first, she started selling simple jewelry with hair and pet fur on Etsy. As a stay-at-home mom, Dezaree said the business began as a hobby and a way to make some extra money. However, the company has massively grown from what it once was.

From exclusively using hair and pet fur, Dezaree said the growth of her business has now led to her using more cremations and ashes. Dezaree said her orders are a 50/50 split between the two.

In addition to the material growth, Dezaree said her work has grown to impact the world, reaching places such as



PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD  
Dezaree Sargent displays a ring which contains a small portion of somebody's cremated remains.

Canada and the United Kingdom.

As customers place their orders for their charmed memory, Dezaree said they are sent kits to help them through the process. Customers place a little piece of the hair or a tablespoon of ashes into these kits and send them back. Dezaree said orders take about three-to-five weeks to complete.

However, Dezaree said one downside of the process comes with sending the remains through the mail, as they could get lost.

"That happens sometimes. It's like a little tiny bit of hair is all they have left, and then it gets lost in the mail, and they don't have it," Dezaree said.

For that reason, Dezaree said she advises customers only to send a small amount of what they have and not the whole thing.

All done from her home, Dezaree hand-crafts epoxy resin liquid to make her jewelry. Dezaree said she mixes the resin in equal parts with the two-part liquid and then pours it into the jewelry base. From there, she fills in the gaps with the ashes and resin. In 24 hours, Dezaree said the jewelry was hardened and resembled the glass look.

Corey Sargent, Dezaree's husband,

also makes his mark on the business. He makes the glass necessary for the glass jewelry.

"She gives me the ashes, I degas them and then encapsulate them in glass," Corey said. "Then, put them into a bead, charm, necklace...whatever you're going for."

Even with her success with her products, Dezaree said her choice to get into the business didn't come without scrutiny.

"The general public would be, 'That's kind of gross, kind of creepy, nobody would want to see their dead pets' fur in the keychain,'" Dezaree said. "I was like, 'Well, you never know.'"

Corey said knowing this fueled him to do everything he could to ensure his wife succeeded.

"It was really the underdog thing. I really wanted it to work. I really wanted her to succeed and turn into exactly what it has turned into. It has really been an awesome thing to see," he said.

The business has become an outlet for customers to wear their emotions on their sleeves literally.

Customer Jessie Miller said she had purchased items from Charmed Memories a couple of times, and she appreciates the effort that Dezaree puts into beautifully memorializing what could easily be forgotten.

"She puts color in them. She makes them beautiful. They shine. They are memorialized because they're kept that way. Ashes in an urn on a shelf, to me ... you put them up there, and you forget about them," Miller said.

In addition to the hand-crafted jewelry, Dezaree said she takes her business to the next level by diving deeper into the physicality of the ashes. With her cremation macrophotography services, she closely examines the "cremains".

To do this, Dezaree said she uses a unique sifter to separate the smaller particles from the large particles in the ashes. This created a unique vision Dezaree said she had never seen before.

"I started seeing all these colorful pieces in the ashes...it was pink, and blue and green," Dezaree Sargent said.

Dezaree said the different minerals in the body react differently to the cremation temperature, causing them to obtain their bright colors under the microscope.

After taking the pictures, Dezaree said she sends them to customers upon request.

"A lot of people are really interested in looking, just because they say it's more beautiful ... every cremation of ashes is different. That was them. That was their makeup. They think that it's comforting to see, I guess, the beauty of what was left over."

Even with the beauty of the job, Dezaree said there are times when it can be-

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This piece of jewelry contains a puzzle piece made of cremated remains. Dezaree Sargent makes the pieces to memorialize a loved one.

## Keepsakes

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come overwhelming.

Dezaree said working so closely with death, she has a hard time processing it.

"You talk to people every single day about them losing people they love, and sometimes it gives me a lot of anxiety. I think about my death or my family members' death a lot more now than I used to," Dezaree said.

To cope with that, Dezaree said time with her family is important.

"I spend time with my kids. I feel like I'm a lot more present, [and] at the moment because I realize you never know," Dezaree said. "So, we're just taking everything as it comes."

Charmed Memories is partnered with Ophelia's Eclectics at 1838 Henley Road. Dezaree said that's where work samples can be found, local pickups/drop-offs and consultations take place.

However, Dezaree said she hopes to further expand in the local community.

"I'm kind of hoping now that I have this spot...maybe I can get more local customers. A lot of people say they didn't know that it was ever an option to have stuff made like that. So, I'm hoping to get a little bit more involved in the local community," Dezaree said.