

## A Tech Executive Starts a Web Site to Help Busy Employees Care for Themselves

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The adage that the Chinese character for crisis means "danger plus opportunity" may not be true. (Some scholars argue that the character's meaning is more like "a dangerous, critical moment.") But the crisis concept worked for Rockville resident Mary Moslander, who saw the opportunity for a business after a dangerous slide in her health.

Mary was working for The Washington Post's Web site in 2004 when her third daughter, now a healthy 3-year-old, was born with heart and lung problems. "It kind of changed how I viewed the world," Mary says. She quit her job, though she was the primary breadwinner (husband Frank is dean of curriculum at Bethesda's Norwood School). "I knew that I needed to do something different."

Mary, then 37, knew that she also needed to make lifestyle changes. She had worn herself out caring for the baby to the point of being hospitalized, and she wanted to lose weight and get in shape. Nothing she tried helped, until friend Janice Hansan suggested that they call each other daily to discuss what they had eaten and how much they had exercised. "Having to report back to Janice was a huge, huge motivator," says Mary, who calls it "the positive side of peer pressure."

Mary lost more than 30 pounds, and found an idea: What if she could create a Web site that would inform people about healthy choices and motivate them to make those choices through coaching and personal support? While not a health expert, Mary knew she had the necessary business expertise. She had a master's degree in organizational development and had spent her career helping old media benefit from new technology, winding up as vice president of strategy and development at washingtonpost.com.

Mary and her husband decided to fund the startup costs of her new company, LiveHealthier, from savings and investments. At the beginning, Mary was the sole employee and took no salary. She outsourced development of the ad-free Web site to a company in Bangalore, India, and hired dietitians and trainers as the number of clients seeking advice grew. The Rockville-based company now has 15 employees and a pool of contractors.

Mary soon realized that targeting individual subscribers wasn't cost-effective and started marketing the site to companies interested in improving their employees' health. Now LiveHealthier has four major corporate clients, with a total of 6,500 employees who can turn to the site for information or help with issues such as weight loss and smoking cessation. Workers can speak to counselors by telephone, e-mail or videoconference, and can sign up for group support.

"It's been fantastic," says Ann Skye, program manager for employee wellness at Quintiles, a North Carolina-based clinical research firm with 5,300 North American workers -- many of whom travel. "They have very hectic, busy lifestyles," says Skye, "and it's hard for them to be consistent with wellness activities and hard for them to feel connected to the company." The Web site addresses both issues, she says.

LiveHealthier made \$250,000 in revenue in 2006 and should top \$1 million this year, Mary says. And the CEO, who has maintained her weight loss, now has even more reason to do so. The first thing potential clients do when meeting the head of a company that promotes a healthy lifestyle is "check you out," she says, laughing.



**Healthful Choices:** After changing her own lifestyle, Mary Moslander wants to motivate others to become fit, too.