

Stylist and personal shopper, **Angie Dudley**, 41, has been editing local Athenians' wardrobes since 2006. While restoring closets and outfitting clients, Dudley tries to instill some personal fashion rules. "I push for my clients to buy high and low end fashion and really not much in between," Dudley explains. "I like to not put too much money into trendy items, but I feel it's important to invest into wardrobe-building pieces that will be around a long while."

Her career path, however, didn't exactly follow the norm. What was once just shopping for friends quickly turned into a lucrative business. Dudley remembers going into Atlanta to shop, always with other people in the back of her mind. Once somebody finally offered her money to pick out their clothes, she realized that she could make a career out of her passion.

A graduate of the University of Georgia, Dudley finds herself among the lucky few that truly love what they do for a living. "There's something kind of fun about helping people in a way that nobody else would," Dudley says. "I think you sort of either know it and your good at it or not, and you just need to be honest with people. I knew I was good at this, but I don't have the personality to be that direct." For Dudley, confidence in what you're doing is key; the rest will follow.

That's not to say there won't be any obstacles. In difficult financial times, like a recession, local business owners often find their sales dramatically lowered. But it's that "We Can Do It" attitude that Dudley possesses that sets her apart. She, like our favorite recession spokeswoman (Rosie the Riveter), recognizes that people have to band together and invest their hard-earned money into local businesses. Having lively local economies to keep money circulating in the area is the only way for small business owners and our nation to get through this recession.

On top of all this financial mess, women also have to consider their kids. Dudley, the proud parent of two beautiful children says, "I'm a mom, and my son has autism. I made a real, conscious decision to give him everything I could, but at a certain point you have to just leave it in God's hands."

Owning a small business is perfect for Dudley for exactly that reason. She loves the flexibility, the ability to say no and that she can tailor it around when her kids are in school. For Dudley, this job is a good vacation from children and house life. A firm believer that all women should have outside activities, she says, "I feel it's important for every mom to have something to do that's separate from being a mother."

However, it's important to remember that starting a business is a process and not something that happens overnight. Marketing yourself is now more important – and easier – than ever. Dudley sent out a small mailer years ago and also has a website. "It's all about word of mouth," she says.

As a self-proclaimed low-tech woman, Dudley much prefers the hands-on kind of work. "I'm not saving the world, but it helps people's self esteem. It just makes someone happy."

To get monthly tips and learn more about Dudley's styling business, visit her at AngieDudley.net. Also, look for Dudley's style column in upcoming issues of Athena.

Kate Parham is a writer for Athena Magazine and student at UGA.

Editor's Note: I suggested Angie for our cover for many reasons, including avoidance of the suggestions that I should be our cover girl myself! During the snowstorm in March, I saw her as I was checking into the Hilton when our power went off (and stayed off). Not only did she have her daughter, son and niece with her, but she had also reserved a room for an elderly friend that she had made years ago at Weaver D's. She told me that her friend used to eat alone there, and that she decided to eat with him from that point on and has continued to do this on a weekly basis. Angie sometimes runs errands for him as well. When she realized that her dear friend also had no electricity, she decided to pick him up to stay in the hotel, too. And that is what we call Athena cover material!



INSIGHT

By Shannon Baker

As a small business owner myself, I knew that I needed to do something special with our Home and Business issue. We decided to dedicate this issue to all of the small and not-so-small businesses that make Athens and the surrounding area special.

For the first time in 10 years, I have felt the downturn of the economy at the two magazines I publish: *Athens Parent* and *Athena Magazine for Women*. With many of our advertisers being retail shops, I have listened to owner after owner talk about the drop in sales. I understand the cycle that happens when things become tight – we stop buying, the stores go out of business, then we lose our jobs and we can't buy.

I am not very good at saving, and I think retail therapy IS very therapeutic. I guess that our goal is to save a little, spend a little and give a little. With the next several pages, we have given our advertisers the opportunity to use their ad space to let our readers get to know them a little more.

Having a connection with the businesses in our area is the first step to being a true community.



Shannon loads her van with issues of *Athena* to take to her favorite local businesses as the poster she bought many years ago for her first "real" office gets unloaded to relocate to her home office.