

Mamapreneurs member / April McCray
Cardboard creations take off

by David R. Anderson, The Oregonian
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RANDY L. RASMUSSEN/The Oregonian

April McCray runs Color Me House out of her Sherwood home. She came up with the idea for cardboard playhouses and rockets after building forts for her children but not being able to find anything like them for sale. "We were surprised at how little was offered," she says.

By the time April McCray had her third child, she was an expert at building forts.

So when 1-year-old Cael was ready for his first cardboard-and-sheet creation, his older brother Cade thought that wasn't good enough.

"My son said, 'Mom, why can't you make a rocket?'" McCray says.

That was the birth of Color Me House. (*Color Me House:* info@colormehouse.com)

About two months ago, the Sherwood mother launched her business selling cardboard playhouses and rockets that come in white, so

children can paint and decorate them. The nearly 6-foot-tall rocket, which sells for \$44.95, is big enough for two or three children.

"People look at it and say, 'Wow!'" McCray says.

Her local manufacturer has promised 4,000 units available for the holiday season.

So far, the structures are sold online and in Portland at Posh Boutique in the Pearl District and Finnegan's Toys & Gifts downtown. McCray's goal is to have them in 200 stores within the next six months and double that number by the end of next year.

McCray, 37, would love it if her business becomes a full-time job.

"We have all the best intentions and wishes up front," she says.

She has previous business experience, so she doesn't harbor unrealistic expectations. She and her husband, Rhys McCray, have backgrounds in real estate. They also owned and operated a coffee house in Olympia for four years, which they sold in 2004.

Color Me House has become a family enterprise. Rhys McCray, who is taking a break from real estate, helps design the products. Older children Cade and Kira find that they can be a big help by caring for Cael, who is now 2 years old.

"My kids love what we're doing," April McCray says.