

SBDC guides creative couple to picture-perfect photography studio start-up

by Jo Ann DiMaggio May
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EDWARDSVILLE - Professional photo sessions should be fun, creative and affordable, according to entrepreneur Johnnie “Miss J” Minney, owner of Speak To Miss J Photos, a new portrait studio in Shiloh that opened April 12.

Minney and her husband, Denon, who is the studio’s marketing director, have a creative perspective on photography that is markedly distinct and, arguably, more affordable

than most. A 20-minute photo session allows individuals or a group of up to 15 people to choose their pose, their portrait background and take home 20 photos for just \$40.

In addition to traditional portrait sessions, the Minneys actively host theme photo nights at their new studio, such as Comic Book Heroes, Favorite Sports Team and Cowboys.

“There is no appointment required for theme night,” said Johnnie Minney. “Just show up dressed in your costume connected to the theme and have fun. It’s a great opportunity for you and your friends or family members to create a lasting image.”

Opening a photography studio seemed a natural evolution for the Minneys. Denon’s resume includes eight years of experience in marketing and sales for portrait studios. Johnnie’s background includes informal photography, office administration, teaching and writing.

“I have a real desire to help people capture that special moment in time,” she said. “My brother passed away in November, and because he didn’t like being in pictures we didn’t have a visual legacy of a life well lived. Life changes in an instant. It’s so important to capture those moments, so they live on as vivid memories of those you love.”

The Minneys began meeting with the Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center in July 2016. At that time, Johnnie Minney was expanding the reach of her blog, Speak To Miss J. SBDC Interim Director and Small Business Specialist Jo Ann DiMaggio May began meeting with the Minneys at no cost, providing marketing and pricing expertise, as well as business plan basics such as funding sources, referrals to various business experts including small business microlender Justine PETERSEN, signage professionals, accountants, attorneys and others.

“Jo Ann has been instrumental in helping us figure out and perfect our business plan in order to keep us moving toward our goal,” Denon Minney said. “She helped leverage our audience and provided expert guidance through all the steps we needed to take to launch our photography studio business and to continue growing Johnnie’s blog. We are grateful for all of her time and assistance.”

May said working with Johnnie and Denon Minney has been a truly rewarding experience.

“The Minneys are so passionate about what they do and have great creativity,” May said. “Johnnie and Denon are true entrepreneurs, and I look forward to all their success.”

Speak To Miss J Photos is located at 2241 Country Road in Shiloh. Hours are Monday through Saturday by appointment.

For more information about Speak To Miss J Photos and to book your appointment, see Speak To Miss J Photos on Facebook, access their website at SpeakToMissJ.com or call the Minneys at (618) 272-2070. To access Johnnie Minney's blog, Things You Wanted To Say with Miss J, visit ThingsYouWantedToSay.com.

The [Illinois SBDC at SIUE](#) assists new businesses like Speak To Miss J Photos and existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is a no-cost service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, and [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#).

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining jobs and encouraging capital investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large. To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at (618) 650-2929 or sbdcedw@gmail.com.