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Former TV reporter finds passion in pink

Julie Hayden trades the limelight to sell Mary Kay cosmetics

By Ann Carnahan, Rocky Mountain News

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Julie Hayden covered all the big stories as a hard-charging reporter for KMGH-TV in Denver: the murder of JonBenet Ramsey, the tragedy at Columbine High School, an Oklahoma City bombing trial and the dawn of the new millennium.

But earlier this year, she quietly left the limelight of television to pursue a different passion.

Mauve Elegance, Sunny Spice and Orange Crush, to be more specific.

She sells Mary Kay cosmetics.

"Everybody thinks I'm crazy" for leaving Denver's 7, Hayden said. "But I haven't looked back. It was time for something new."

Hayden, 45, isn't your run-of-the mill, hobby-level peddler of Mary Kay. As an independent sales director, she has recruited more than three dozen women to push lipsticks, eye shadows and blushes marketed by the \$1.6 billion direct-sales giant. She gets a cut of every order they place.

"The great thing about Mary Kay," says the personable, energetic Hayden, "is if you have skin, you're a potential customer."

And for Hayden, an equally great thing is the money. She expects to match her Denver's 7 salary in three months, and by April, hopes to land that supreme symbol of Mary Kay success: a pink Cadillac.

To do that, she and her recruits will have to sell \$96,000 worth of makeup in a six-month period. Her take: \$6,000 to \$8,000 a month.

But c'mon, does she really want anybody to see her in a pink Cadillac?

"Shoot," she says, "I drove around for years in a giant Channel 7 truck."

It was in one of those trucks three years ago that her Mary Kay destiny was born.

"I was riding with a photographer and putting on makeup, because that's what we did, and I was griping about it. I was a makeup snob. And the photographer says his wife sold it. He calls his wife on the phone and booked her to come to my house that night. And \$300 later . . . "

About the same time, Hayden says she was becoming increasingly unhappy at her job. There was no time, she said, to investigate stories and "the financial opportunities were pretty limited," too.

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Nevertheless, Hayden's career at Denver's 7 reads like an editors' poll of top news stories. In 1992, her producers sent her to Little Rock, Ark., on election night to do a story on the new president. In 1997, skinhead Nathan Thill confessed to her on camera that he'd murdered African immigrant Oumar Dia in downtown Denver. Two years later, her testimony helped send Thill to prison for life.

She also covered Timothy McVeigh's 1997 Oklahoma City bombing trial. And last year, she was on the scene of the devastating Hayman fire, the largest in Colorado history.

It was heady at times - "I always wanted to be a reporter," she says - but there were aspects of TV she gladly left behind.

"In the broadcast career, you knock on someone's door and say, 'Hello, I know your whole family just died, but we really need a picture for the news. . . . Now, I go and say, 'Hi, would you like to try my lipstick?' It's easy."

Hayden, who has a journalism degree from Iowa State University, is the daughter of a landscape contractor and homemaker who brought her up "to decide what you want out of life and you go get it."

She was a reporter for two decades, including 14 years at KMGH. She is married to a Westminster police sergeant and has a 17-year-old daughter.

The beauty of Mary Kay, she said, is that she can decide how many hours to put in - easily 40 a week - and when she works them.

"I sit down on Sundays and plan my life," Hayden said. "I put in all the stuff I want to do first. Wednesday is date night with my husband, so I don't schedule anything on Wednesday night. My daughter is in poms. If she's got a game, I go to that."

On Tuesday nights, Hayden meets at a local hotel with her recruits for a pep talk.

"I've got money to give away!" enthuses Hayden on a recent Tuesday. She is wearing a black suit trimmed in pink and standing next to a poster that reads, "You've got the power. Star power."

She invites each of the four women who have snared a new recruit to step forward and select one of the paper pumpkins pasted to a poster. She flips over the pumpkins they choose to reveal their winnings: \$5, \$10 or \$20.

The women kibitz about makeup: "I'll be perfectly honest with you," says one, "the Cantaloupe (lipstick) is a little orangey."

Hayden drafted her recruits through friends and friends of friends. She signed up relatives, neighbors, her manicurist, hair stylist, old TV pals and a woman she met while walking at FlatIron Crossing mall. Her husband found one recruit at a barbecue he attended.

Her weekly meetings with them reflect one of her favorite aspects of TV reporting.

"I still get to stand up," Hayden said, "and be the center of attention."

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