

AMY 'BA BAM' SMITH ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Amy, Mrs Future BaBam

I am just sitting here in class thinking about the future "ME." Well if I went off of childhood dreams I'd become a ballerina but I don't think that's in the cards for me.... Never took a dance class. But I am a Super Creative. Who knows what Crafty Crazies we can do?



So here's some advice from little o' me to future BIG me.

- 1. Don't let the "high school" drama get to you. Even when you're out of school- you'll still feel like your in it if you don't keep your crafty crew small.
- 2. Don't compare yourself to others. Hold your head high and cherish your own accomplishments. You are not like others- you are YOU.
- 3. Don't give up, keep going, you may have moments you feel you failed but keep pursuing your passion.
- 4. And well be your own Cheerleader- wake up- look in that mirror and tell yourself you CAN DO THIS- your dreams/desires are Worth IT.



- 5. I've heard the best things in life are things we work hard for- so hard work doesn't stop outta school- you've got to keep learning, keep trying, keep DOING, keep GOING even though there could be hard seasons- just keep going.
- 6. And stop trying to FIT IN- honey, you were born to STAND OUT! No need to worry about fitting in the popular crowd- you'll never stand out in there- BE DIFFERENT!
- 7. And lastly, be confident in whom God made you to be-that will take you far.

Now go get your Creative Booty in GEAR! Go BAM!

Amy



ASHLEY GREENWOOD ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Wreath Maker.

Hey there! It's me - high school Ashley - writing from a time when I had no idea just how far my love of crafting would take me.

I've always been crafty (thanks to my grandmothers who passed down their creative spark), but I never imagined it would grow into a business... or a whole community of wreath-loving creatives.



Along the way, there were challenges — messy bows, burned fingers, doubt creeping in when things didn't sell, or when life got overwhelming.

But I kept going. And I want you to do the same.

Start where you are. Share your work. Believe in your gift. You don't need perfection — you just need persistence.

This community is better because you're in it. Keep making. Keep dreaming. You were made for this.



With ribbon and encouragement,
Ashley Greenwood
(who thought she'd always be a kindergarten teacher)



CODY HANSHEW ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Wreath Maker,

Hello from 17-year-old me—fresh out of high school, diploma in hand, about to head off to study theater and communications in college. I've spent my teenage years stealing the spotlight as the starring role in school musicals and competition plays, directing student-led productions, helping the PTA create magic for prom, and bringing art shows to life. Little do I know, those passions will lead me far beyond the stage.

Here's what I want you to carry with you, no matter where you are on your creative path:



- **1.** It's okay to rewrite your script. You'll leave college early—realizing that lecture halls can't contain your imagination—and work a handful of dead-end jobs that don't value your creativity. Those restless moments will push you to make your own way, rather than follow someone else's plan.
- **2. Creativity lives in every detail.** Fast forward to 2020, and you'll discover wreath-making for the first time when Mom asks you to craft a simple door decoration. That kitchen-table experiment will blossom into a full-blown passion—decorating wedding venues, local businesses, the entire Historic Jefferson Hotel and the stately rooms of the Virginia Governor's Mansion for multiple Christmas seasons.
- **3. Perseverance turns uncertainty into opportunity.** When doubts creep in, you'll challenge yourself to try one more technique, one more color combo, even when the outcome isn't guaranteed. By channeling your energy into How I See It, you'll transform unemployment into a thriving business, brightening hundreds of homes and events with every design you create.



5. Share joy on a grand scale—and for good causes. Every design you create will be big, bold, and bursting with joy—just like the over-the-top trees and events you're known for. You'll host unforgettable retreats where makers connect and spark inspiration, and you'll use your platform to raise awareness for mental health, suicide prevention, and other causes close to your heart.

To each of you here at Wreath Makers Live—whether you're dreaming of your first craft project or you've already created hundreds—keep dreaming big and creating boldly. Your art isn't just decoration; it's a celebration of life's moments, a beacon of joy, and a chance to see the world How I See It.

Keep crafting your story—one ribbon loop at a time. I'm cheering for you from the stage wings of a high school auditorium all the way to this very moment.

With boundless creativity and encouragement, 17-year-old Cody



DAMON OATES ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Wreath-Preneur,

Hey there. I'm writing to you from way back in high school when I had zero idea that ribbon and mesh would change my life.

Right now, I'm just a kid trying to survive feeling alone, different, and out of place... trying to figure out who I am, and wondering if I'll ever find something that makes me feel like I actually belong.

Spoiler alert: I do. And you will too



The future? It's full of hot glue burns, late-night bow-making sessions, tech and algorithm headaches, and yep, plenty of moments where you question whether anyone will ever buy the thing you just poured your heart into.

But it's also full of joy, creativity, and this wild, incredible community built on more than just wreaths. It's built on people showing up for each other. On resilience. On passion.

There will be days when you feel like giving up. When nothing sells. When life gets loud. When it feels like you're shouting into the void.

I've been there.

But every single time I almost gave up, something small reminded me why I started. A message from someone who was inspired. A sale. A breakthrough. A reason to keep going.

Here's what I want you to remember: You don't have to be perfect. You just have to **be persistent**. You don't need all the answers. You just need to **keep taking messy, meaningful action.**



The world needs your creativity. Your ideas. Your version of beauty. So show up, not just for your business, but for yourself.

It won't always be easy. But I promise, it will be worth it.

Oh, and one more thing. You're not alone. You've got a whole community cheering you on, past, present, and future.

Now go create something amazing.

With a hopeful heart,
Damon
(Future Ribbon Obsessed, Glitter Covered CEO)



JORDAN MATTHEW ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Me.

I don't know exactly where life will take me, but I hope you've found your way into something you truly love. Right now, I'm just a teenager with a head full of dreams, unsure if they're even possible. But I know one thing: I've always loved being creative.

Maybe, just maybe, that passion has turned into something bigger.



If you're reading this as someone who's built a business or a community around your creativity, remember how far you've come. Remember the challenges you've overcome— the fear of putting yourself out there, the setbacks, the self-doubt—and how every single one taught you something valuable.

Most of all, I hope you're helping others who are standing where we once stood. Remind them that it's okay to start small, to make mistakes, to learn as they go. Tell them to dream bigger than they think is possible and to never give up on what lights them up inside.

To the future wreath makers out there: You are capable of more than you realize. Keep going, even when it's hard.



One step at a time is still moving forward. Believe in your gifts, and don't be afraid to share them with the world.

Stay passionate. Stay humble. Stay creative.

Your younger self, Jordan



JULIE SIOMACCO ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Me.

It's 1987, and I have no clue who I am.

I'm just trying to survive—sneaking out to find the next party, drowning in Aqua Net and Madonna, doing whatever it takes to feel seen. But at school, I'm not accepted. At home, I feel judged. My mom doesn't understand me, and I never quite live up to her standards. I feel like I don't belong anywhere.

I procrastinate. I quit on myself. I say I don't care, but I do. I just want to be enough. And in trying to escape the pain, I partied too hard. I was reckless. I put myself in dangerous situations. One night, I almost didn't make it out. I even wondered if this world would be better without me.



But somewhere deep inside... there was a voice. A whisper. My intuition. It was always there—sometimes screaming, sometimes gentle. I didn't know how to listen to it then, but it never gave up on me.

Fast forward to 2025...

I'm a great mom to three incredible kids. I'm not just alive—I'm thriving. I've quit jobs that crushed my spirit, left relationships that dimmed my light, and followed that inner voice to build something I never could have imagined. I found someone who accepts me exactly as I am—DJ Mike. With him, I don't have to pretend or prove. I get to just be loved.

You're not only visible—you're seen. You're not just included—you created the room. You didn't just find your place—you built a community where others belong too. You're a leader, a creator, a business owner, a speaker, and a teacher. And the best part? You did it all without fitting into a mold.

You were never meant to fit in. You were meant to become.



You faced the hard bosses, the heartbreak, the unknowns, and you chose again. You rewired your mind from lack to abundance. From quitting to creating. From wondering "what if" to living "why not?"

You became the boss you never had. You taught yourself floristry, marketing, mindset, leadership. You traded wine for clarity. You changed your story—on purpose.

And now you stand here, in a room full of dreamers, showing them what's possible when they stop running from who they were—and start believing in who they can become

To anyone reading this: You are *not* broken. You are *becoming*. Your past doesn't define you—it fuels you. The pain, the drama, the heartbreak, the people who didn't see you? They were lessons. And you? You're the miracle.

Whatever motivates you—freedom, love, money, peace—use it. Let it guide you toward the life you're meant to live. Trust that quiet voice inside. It already knows the way.

Because just like Marty McFly, you'll hit bumps, yes—but the journey? It's transformational.

Love,

Julie (circa 1987... and beyond)



KARA WEBSTER ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Self,

I'm currently in my senior year of high school, and I'm obsessed with Alanis Morissette. the movie Clueless, and shopping at Contempo. Even though I'm almost 18 and I'm still not allowed to watch MTV and my parents ground me over the dumbest things. So lame, but in other news...I'm working as an assistant at a local florist. It's so nice being surrounded by all the beautiful flowers. The florists working there are so talented, and they've been teaching me a little about floral design.



My boss was in a mood the other day and snapped at me because the bows I make are lousy. When she left, one of the designers sat down and patiently gave me a lesson. My bows still need a lot of work, but I think if I keep practicing, I'll be able to make them one day too. Ooh, I'd love to see the look on my boss's face then!

My love of flowers has grown so much that I went to AC Moore (the one next to Ames) and picked up some artificial flowers, wire, and a grapevine wreath. I wasn't exactly sure what I was doing, but I sat at the kitchen table, wiring flowers stem by stem and made my first wreath. Mom was so happy when I gave it to her that she asked Dad to hang it on the front door right away. Having it on display for all the neighbors to see made me kind of embarrassed, but also excited. I don't think it's as nice as the wreaths in stores, but Mom swears it is. I really hope she's not just saying that to be nice



This new hobby makes me so happy that I'm starting to wonder... could this be my job someday? What if I owned a flower shop, but instead of live flowers, they were all fake? It's wild to dream that big, but you never know...

So if you're reading this and you actually turned this love of flowers into a job-l'm super proud of you. Proud that you didn't give up. Proud that you put the time in. Proud that you made our dream come true!

XO, High School Kara



KAREN GRESHAM ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Me (and Fellow Creatives),

Hey there—this is me, just a high school senior, full of big dreams and a heart full of hope. Right now, I don't know exactly what life will look like. I just know I'm stepping out into the world, holding tight to the people I love and praying I'll find my way.

I don't yet know that I'll marry my high school sweetheart and have two beautiful children. I don't know that heartbreak will come—or that healing will follow. I don't know that the love of my life is still waiting for me, and that one day we'll build a life full of laughter, love, and six incredible grandbabies



I don't know yet how hard it will be to figure out what I want to be when I grow up. That I'll try teaching, waiting tables, working in a factory—before finally hearing a calling loud and clear: nursing. I don't know I'll go through nursing school as a single mom with babies at my feet and textbooks in my lap. But I will make it. I'll become a nurse. And I'll keep going—rising into leadership and staying in that role for over 20 years.

What I really don't know yet is that one day I'll face a diagnosis I didn't see coming—breast cancer on my very first mammogram. And somehow, in the middle of that storm, I'll discover something unexpected: wreath making. What started as a creative outlet during recovery will grow into something so much bigger than I could imagine. Wreaths in every room. Craft shows. A full-blown business.

Now, I get to blend my love of creating, teaching, and helping others. I teach wreath making and floral design to creatives across the country—and even around the world—as a design coach. I've built courses to help other makers find success as craft show vendors, and I've created my own private membership group where we learn, grow, and encourage one another in both business and life.

So if you're just starting out, wondering if you're cut out for this... hear me loud and clear: You are.



Obstacles will come. Setbacks will happen. But you don't have to have it all figured out right now. You just have to take the next right step. What matters most isn't the challenge itself—it's how you respond. That's what carries you to your next great adventure.

So don't give up. Keep creating. Keep believing. And most of all, keep showing up—even when it's hard, even when you're unsure. You never know where a roll of ribbon or a hot glue gun might take you.

Create with purpose, sell with heart, Karen Gresham



KERRY YOUNG ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Wreath Maker.

Hi! It's me—well, the younger me. Back when I was in high school, I didn't know exactly where life would take me. I just knew I loved being creative—cutting, sticking, decorating anything I could get my hands on.

If you're reading this, that means you're standing at the beginning of your own creative journey—and I want you to know something important: you've got what it takes. Even if you don't feel like it yet.



There'll be times when the ribbons won't behave, the wreath won't come together, or self-doubt sneaks in and whispers, "Is this really worth it?" Trust me—I've been there. I've faced setbacks, struggled with pain in my arm that made crafting hard, and even questioned if I could keep going. But every time, I reminded myself: this isn't just about wreaths. It's about spreading joy, bringing beauty into people's homes, and doing something that lights you up inside.

You'll learn that mistakes are just part of the magic. You'll find your style. You'll grow stronger with every creation. And one day, you'll look back and realise how far you've come—how many doors (literally!) you've helped people decorate with love and who knows maybe even host your own event one day \mathfrak{S}



So keep going, even when it's hard. Dream big. Don't be afraid to take up space and show the world what your hands and heart can do. There's room for you in this community—and it wouldn't be the same without your unique touch.

From one ribbon-loving, bow-obsessed dreamer to another: You've got this.

With love and glitter,
Kerry
(age 16, with wild ideas and a heart full of dreams x)



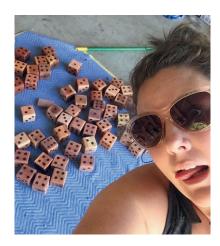
MARISSA SAYERS ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Wreath Maker.

It's Marissa! Wanted to chat and give you some thoughts and facts about my journey which started back when I was just a girl with a printer, some sticker paper, and a pair of kitchen scissors.

I didn't know what I was doing. I just knew I loved making things. That first business? It was planner stickers cut out by hand, one by one, until I could afford real scissors... then a sliding cutter... then finally a Silhouette machine. Every upgrade felt like a small miracle for real.

And since then? I've run multiple companies product based, service based, sales based & so much more. None of it was perfect. Some things burned me out. Some things I outgrew.



But I never gave up, I just kept pivoting. Being loose and flexible will take you far in being an entrepreneur!

If you're reading this and just starting your creative journey, I want you to know something:

You don't have to have it all figured out. In fact, I want you to start before you have everything figured out.

You don't need a fancy studio or a perfect plan. You just need to start. One product. One customer. One brave little move forward. The antidote to fear is action so the more afraid you are the more action you need to take to get you out of that fear!

Something that I wish I had known how to price myself properly from the beginning. Undercharging led me straight into burnout hole of doom more than once. But each mistake taught me something. Each pivot brought me closer to the life I always knew I was meant for even when I didn't fully believe it yet.

And here I am now doing things I always dreamed of. It doesn't even feel real sometimes.

So here's my advice to you:



Believe in yourself even when it feels ridiculous. Keep evolving. And please, take your mindset seriously.

It's not just a cute quote on Instagram it's the difference between building a business that drains you... and building one that changes your life. Your mindset is the most important thing that you have in creating a successful business.

You've got this. You really, really do- even when you feel like you don't you have made it through 100% of every single day so far!

Love Marissa,

the stay at home Mom cutting stickers with kitchen scissors who had no idea how magical things would get



MEGHAN FUGATE ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Gal vs Glue Gun,

Heyyyyyyy there. It's me—well, the beginner version of me. I'm in my craft room, probably covered in hot glue and glitter, trying to figure out how to make a bow that doesn't look like a crumpled shoelace. I'm not a business owner (yet), and honestly, I have no clue where this whole wreath-making thing will take me. But I do know one thing: I love creating and can't wait to inspire others. Even when it's messy. Even when it feels like no one notices. Even when I mess up more than I get it right.

I wanted to write you this letter from the "past" because I know how hard the beginning can be. I know what it's like to compare your creations to someone else's and feel like you're not good enough. I know the sting of rejection, the frustration of learning new things, the doubt that creeps in when the glue gun burns feel more constant than the wins.



But I want you to hear this loud and clear:

You are not alone.

Every wreath maker once struggled with wire that wouldn't cooperate and bows that just wouldn't behave. Every creative has questioned their talent. Every business owner has doubted their worth. You're allowed to be a beginner. Just don't stay one forever.

What matters is that you keep going and learning

Even when it's slow.

Even when it's not perfect.

Even when you're not sure anyone's watching.

Because somewhere along the way, something clicks. You learn to trust your eye. You find your style. You hear someone say, "Wow, you made that?" And it lights a spark. Then another. Then another.

Before you know it, you're not just making wreaths—you're building a business, a brand, an inspiring others. You're turning your love for crafting into a way to bring beauty into people's homes...and joy into your own heart.



So here's my beginner pep talk for you:

Don't quit. Dream big. Mess up and laugh. Keep creating.

Because one day, you'll look back at all the moments you wanted to give up... and be so beyond glad you didn't.

I may be writing this from the past, but I already believe in your future. You've got this.

With hope and hot glue,

Your Beginner Self



MELISSA MORROW ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Me.

If you're reading this... wow. That means we made it through the hardest of the hard. There are so many things I hope you've learned — things I'm only starting to whisper to myself now.

First, I hope you believe in yourself. Like really believe — deep in your bones — because that's one thing you DO have control over!

Don't hold back because you are scared of getting it wrong... I hope you've outgrown that fear. Nothing good comes from holding yourself back!



I hope you've learned to take risks — big, wild, heart-thumping ones — because maybe by now you've seen how the scariest leaps often lead to the best parts of life.

I hope you've learned that heartbreak isn't the end. That sometimes, the cracks in your heart are what make room for the best blessings.... This goes for all aspects of life!

And I really hope you've stopped believing the biggest lie I've told myself: that you can't make money doing what you love.

Especially with crafts.

That lie? It's holding me back, and I hate that I believed it. I hope you've proven me wrong!

I hope you're dreaming now. Like really dreaming. Because to be honest, I'm not... it feels like there's this invisible ceiling above me... like I wasn't meant for more. So I don't even try. But maybe you figured out how to shatter that ceiling. Maybe you climbed higher than anyone thought you could.



I hope you're proud. I hope you're free.

And I hope — more than anything — that you've finally learned to be kind to the girl who always doubted she could.

Love, Melissa (Back when I was still figuring it all out)



SHERRELE GIPSON ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear New Wreath Maker.

First, let me say welcome to the wonderful world of wreath making! I'm so excited for you as you begin this creative journey. Whether you've just made your first bow or you're experimenting with mesh, florals, and ribbon combinations, know that you are stepping into a craft filled with joy, expression, and endless possibilities.

A little background of myself. My name is Sherrele Gipson, and I am the owner of Crafty Pants Wreaths, Inc., a business I started over four years ago out of a love for crafting and decorating. Since then, I've had the privilege of designing custom wreaths, swags, garlands, centerpieces, and tree installs. Additionally, my work has been featured on local news stations WKRG News 5 and Fox 10 News.

I've taught in-person and online classes, and I can assure you - every wreath maker starts right where you are: with curiosity, excitement, and maybe a little nervousness!



I first discovered wreath-making during COVID-19. Like many, I was searching for a creative outlet, and I came across Damon from DecoExchange, Amy from Ba Bam Wreaths, and Kandi from Kandi's Kreations. At the time, I had no clue about the amazing wreath world that awaited me, but everyone welcomed me with open arms. I started off making wreaths with Dollar Tree materials for about three months, and that's when I discovered paid wreath groups — and my true journey of success began.

Let me share this important piece of advice: invest in your craft. It may feel scary at first, but it truly pays off. Sell a few wreaths, and use that profit toward joining a paid wreath group or even signing up for a few virtual wreath classes. The knowledge, techniques, and confidence you gain will help you grow and succeed.

Also, please know this: you do not need a huge she shed, your own craft room, or a storefront to succeed. I'm a presenter this year, and I still go live designing from my dining area — and that's perfectly fine! Don't let those things become excuses for why you can't take your business or craft to the next level. What matters most is your dedication, your willingness to learn, and your passion.



Remember:

- **Persevere through the learning curve.** Every seasoned wreath maker has faced challenges but those challenges lead to growth.
- **Trust your creativity.** Be inspired by others, but don't be afraid to let your unique style shine.
- **Celebrate your progress.** One day, you'll look back at your first wreaths and be amazed at how far you've come.

I'm cheering you on, and I hope you'll stay encouraged, stay creative, and most of all — have fun! If you ever need a little extra inspiration or guidance, connect with me on Facebook at @Craftypantswreaths or Crafty pants on Instagram.

With encouragement, Sherrele Gipson Owner, Crafty Pants Wreaths, Inc.



TAMMY HODGES ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Future Me,

Well, here we are... from 2011 to now. And let me tell you—I had no idea where this path was going to take us. Back then, I didn't even know what **deco mesh** was. I was just a tired mama and Army wife trying to survive a deployment, looking for something—anything—that felt creative, fun, and maybe even healing.

Then I stumbled across **Julie Siomacco's eBook** and something clicked. That little spark in my gut? That whisper that said, "Maybe you could do this too?"

It lit a fire that's still burning to this day.

I started selling wreaths while living on Fort Bragg, and you know what I charged? Just the cost of materials. Because I didn't know better—I just knew I loved making them. And it was enough at first. It got me through.



I started selling wreaths while living on Fort Bragg, and you know what I charged? Just the cost of materials. Because I didn't know better—I just knew I loved making them. And it was enough at first. It got me through.

Then came 2013, and something shifted. I moved home. I did a few craft shows. And I realized that this "little hobby" could actually replace my teacher's salary—in just a few months. That was the moment I stopped calling it a side hustle and started treating it like a business.

By 2019, I launched my own group, **Tammy's Troops**, to teach other crafters how to build their own version of this dream. I started coaching not just creativity—but courage. And in 2021, I joined Deco Exchange Coaching, which gave me tools and a community that helped me grow into the leader I am today.

But let me be clear: this journey has not always been easy. Friends have come and gone. Trends have come and gone.

But staying true to myself? That's never gone out of style.

There were seasons when popularity felt like a measuring stick.



But you, Tammy—you finally learned this:

Popularity is a myth. Authenticity is power.

You worked hard. You didn't play games or fake it to make it. And in return? You built a real tribe. You surrounded yourself with people who are as passionate, loyal, and driven as you are. People who see you.

And look at what you've done...

- Two sold-out events with over 100 people each—planned with someone you met at Wreath Makers LIVE 2018
- Multiple appearances on the WML stage—a dream that once felt so far away
- Invitations to speak **across the country**—not because you changed who you are, but because you didn't.



TAMMY HODGES ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

You've built a life you once only dreamed of:

- * Making your own schedule
- * Working from home
- → Teaching, coaching, and crafting with purpose
- ✦ And never once compromising your character to get there

Future Me, here's what I want you to remember:

- Never lose sight of **your why**. That's your anchor.
- You don't have to scream the loudest to make an impact. Be consistent. Be kind. Be you. Stand up for what you believe in or who you believe in.
- Popularity fades. Purpose doesn't.
- Always keep learning—and always turn around to help someone coming up behind you.
- Keep a humble heart. Be proud, not boastful, don't gate keep what you have learned, we are a community and this community will get you so far.
- Stay weird, stay kind, stay full of glitter (and caffeine).

And to the new wreath maker reading this—here's what I wish someone told me at the beginning:

- You don't need fancy tools to start. Just heart, hustle, and hot glue. I used a 2 liter soda bottle and painters tape for a Tri Pod for over a year. Ask the OG's it's 100% true.
- Pon't get caught up in comparing. Focus on creating. Focus on your why.
- Make things that bring you joy—and the right customers will follow. Don't chase money, chase, what you love, the money will come!
- Charge your worth. Your time, talent, and hands are valuable. Y'all I used to charge 49.99, no matter how elaborate because I was allergic to money. (direct quote from Mr. Oates himself).
- Pe patient. Overnight success is usually 10 years in the making. Not always, but it is RARE to happen in just a year or two. Keep your blinders on, don't pay attention to other people's time lines.

Tammy, you did it. And you're still doing it.

With love, laughter, heartache, hustle, and honesty.

And I am so proud of you.

Keep creating. Keep believing.

The best is still ahead.

With love from the garage and the glittered-up trenches,

2011 Tammy

(Armed with a glue gun and big dreams)