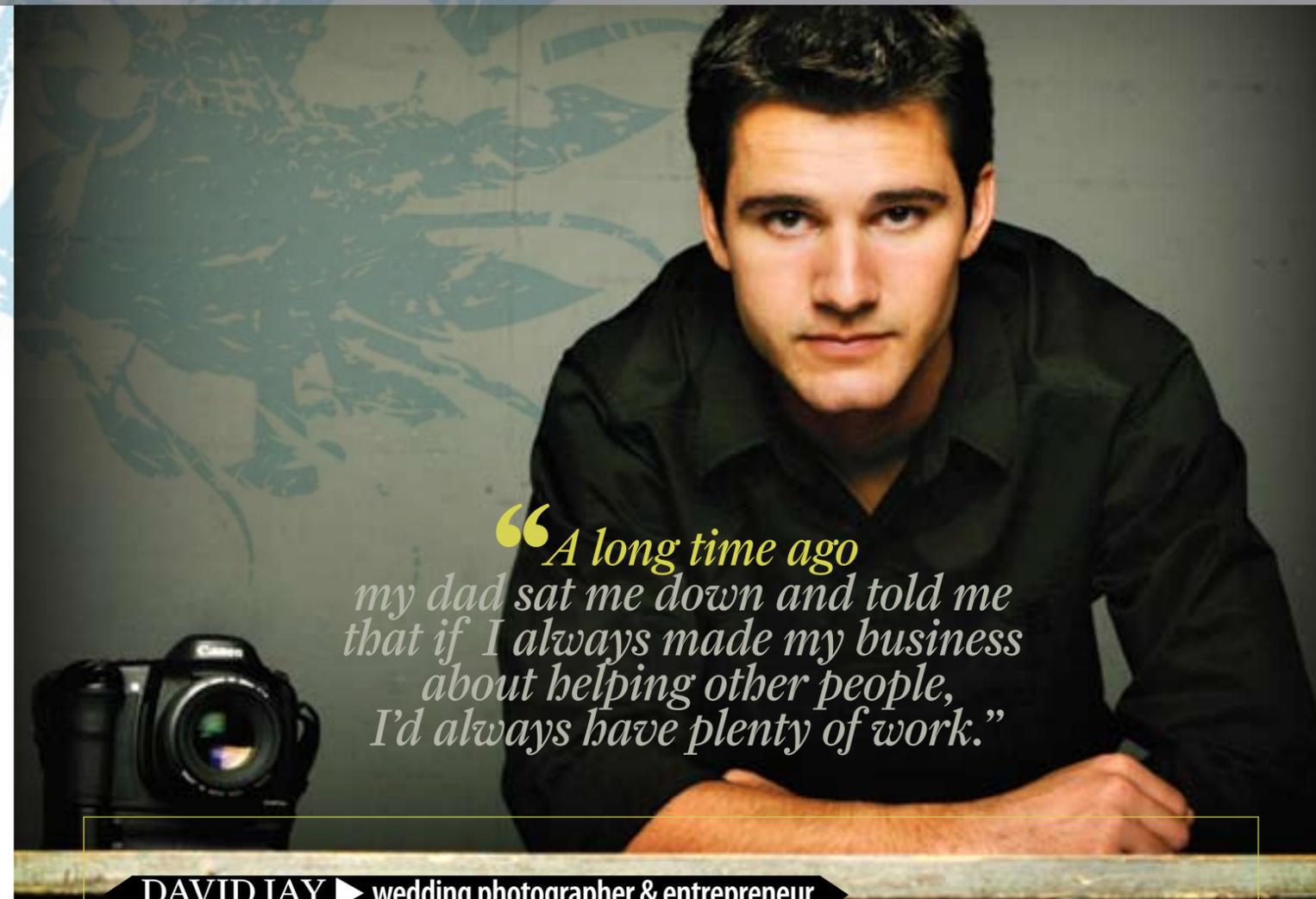


*Introducing
5 people who
took a chance
to love what
they do.*

Dreaming on the Job

Work. In its most practical form, it pays the bills. But in the bigger scheme, it actually helps define us and even gives us purpose. And since we spend the better part of our lives working, it makes sense that the stakes get higher when we think about chasing a dream.

We recently sat down with five people who took a job-related leap of faith. Some made a plan and followed through; some sort of stumbled into their field but decided to stay there. All in all, they each pursued a dream. Here are their stories, how they got where they are, and the most valuable lessons they've learned so far.



*“A long time ago
my dad sat me down and told me
that if I always made my business
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I’d always have plenty of work.”*

DAVID JAY ► wedding photographer & entrepreneur

» *Serve your way to success.*

David Jay never set out to be a wedding photographer. He was simply doing a favor for friends — shooting their weddings because he didn't have the heart to say no.

But the requests kept coming, and in 2003, the California-based shutterbug started David Jay Photography Inc. (davidjay.com). From there he helped create ShowIt Effects, a software program for wedding photographers, and developed Open SourcePhoto.net, a photography forum.

Today Jay earns \$13 grand a wedding, but it's not the money — or his love of the work — that motivates him. “People assume that photography being my passion would drive me,” he says. “[But] it's the people side that I love. Contributing is what drives me. Photography gives me the freedom to help people get where they want to go.

“The best investment you'll ever make will be the time, energy, and love you put into other people,” he adds. “A long time

ago my dad sat me down and told me that if I always made my business about helping other people, I'd always have plenty of work. He was right. Not only have I always had plenty of work, but I've always had plenty of people helping and supporting me with that work.”

Author Tim Sanders' motto, “Your network is your net worth,” has proven true for Jay. “I've found that helping others succeed is the best way to grow a network — that's definitely the most important thing I've done in my business,” he says.

While Jay, 27, has a sharp eye for images and business savvy that has led to continued growth, he's able to keep it in perspective. “I don't deserve to be good at photography,” he says. “I didn't do anything to earn all this. I just walked through a door God opened, and at any point He could take all this away. I don't ever want to feel attached to this. I don't want to feel like that's where my worth is.”

If his worth is measured in the number of people he influences, though, he's surely a success. Jay shoots about 10 weddings each year, which keeps his schedule open to help other photographers. Speaking engagements, seminars, and workshops fill up Jay's calendar, but he manages to maintain an online community that benefits from his success.

“After about six months of shooting, I was doing well, and I started getting a lot of e-mails and phone calls — conversations and questions about photography,” Jay says. “The same questions came up again and again, so I put a forum on my Web site. And now there are 3,000-plus members.”

According to Jay, there are two things all of us need to be doing — growing and contributing. “It's really rewarding to see people grow,” he says. “Photographers almost always have to step out on faith, and that's inspiring. I like to be there to watch others succeed.”

JULIE THWING ▶ doctor and world health harbinger

Pour yourself into the present.

Dr. Julie Thwing is one of those lovely, talented, and intimidating types. Her resumé is an impressive list of degrees and real-world experiences. After completing medical school and residency at Vanderbilt University, she could have easily opted for a high-paid position in private practice. Instead, she chased an under-the-radar post combining disease research and third-world medicine.

During her undergraduate years at Harvard University, Thwing felt the pull of Africa, where she had spent her childhood with missionary parents. She left school for what she calls a “transformative” season to work in a missions hospital in Cameroon. The following year she reenrolled, state-side, on a well-defined path toward medical school.

In 2006, after eight years of classroom and clinical education, Thwing accepted a job with the Center for Disease Control based in Atlanta. As an epidemic intelligence service officer, Thwing, 31, specializes in outbreak investigation and hands-on public health matters. Much of her work is spent studying malaria.

A third of the year she works in an office; the other two-thirds are spent doing field work to gather and analyze disease data. Most recently Thwing spent six weeks in Niger traversing the vast sub-Saharan desert to survey nomadic tribes and ancient villages. The charge was to study the usage of insecticide-treated bednets.



Thwing is committed to world health, though she admits she's not sure what lies beyond her current two-year employment obligation. “I don't have the plan for my life laid out,” she says.

But in the present, the opportunity to improve quality of life has never been better. “Right now there is a lot [of] public will and interest,” Thwing says. “There are more resources and influence, so we are able to make a difference to millions of people.

“We are supposed to be salt and light in the world,” she adds. “There are so many organizations to work with that will send you where you're needed. ... You don't have to have an enormous amount of education; you just have to be willing to go.”

GRETCHEN SWIFT ▶ assistant federal public defender

Be open to opportunities.

When Gretchen Swift applied for a job with a department of public advocacy, she had hopes of serving the poor — after all, that's why she went to law school. “It sounded similar to the advocacy programs I'd heard about,” she says. “The job description certainly didn't say anything about criminals.”

Turns out, “public advocacy” meant she would assist inmates at Kentucky's Maximum Security Prison with post-conviction appeals. “The salary was around \$19 thousand, [and] I had never even been near a jail or prison before,” Swift says. “But I left the interview knowing I had to accept the

job. And God created that opportunity to prepare me for the job I have now.”

Today, as an assistant federal public defender working with many death-penalty cases, the odds aren't in her clients' favors. “When it gets close, hours and days before, and you know what's about to happen, it's heavy knowing that what you say or write may or may not save someone's life,” Swift says.

Yet while the work is tough, Swift, 31, has found it to be rewarding. “My clients aren't accustomed to having someone believe in them or believe they are people of value,” she says. “I'm speaking on behalf of their lives when no one else is willing to.”



REBECCA SWIFT

MICAH KANDROS ▶ graphic designer

Uncomfortable is good for you.

Micah Kandros is admittedly not a risk taker by nature. So a few months ago, when he left the stability of a cushy corporate job of six years where he had respect, a future, and a 401(k) plan, his faith was tested in a new way.

“I've always been a planner and a saver,” Kandros, 29, says. “I've worked hard to be four steps ahead in everything I've ever done. In that sense, I've always been comfortable.”

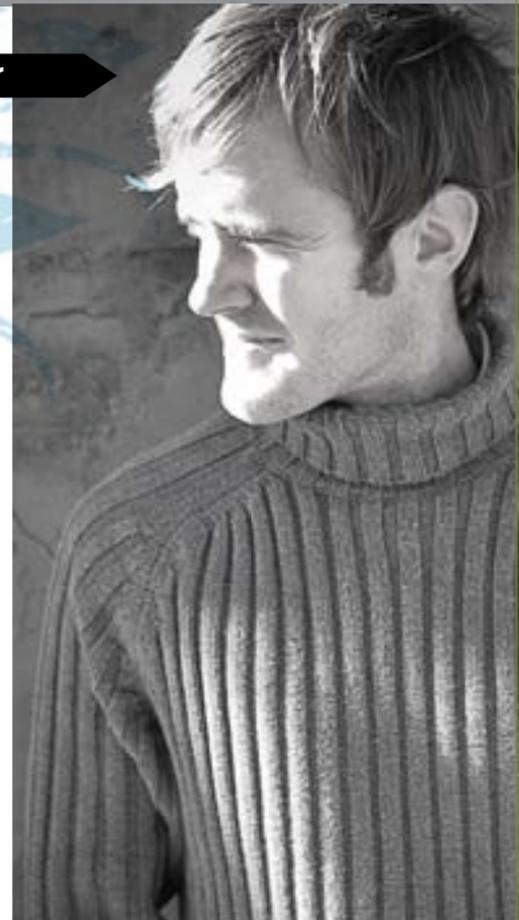
But comfortable has its consequences. “It's a strange thing. When God gives you a gift for something like design, the gift you've been given is the very thing that causes you to feel like you don't need God — especially when there's enough

demand for your work that you turn down jobs,” he says.

But with a new season comes new perspective. With the establishment of Micah Kandros Design (micahkandrosdesign.com), his view on self-reliance changed. “When you're on your own, every insecurity you have comes at you at the same time,” Kandros says. “The tendency to be self-reliant and map out your future is overwhelming. To think that I can do this [career] on my own — that I can handle this — is a lie.

“I'm here to learn to trust, not to build a career,” Kandros adds. “God will always teach you more in the valley than on the mountaintop. Every uncomfortable moment is for my good.”

“When you're on your own, every insecurity you have comes at you at the same time.”



NEIL VISEL

KATIE TAYLOR ▶ feature casting associate

Never be afraid to have an opinion.

At 27, Katie Taylor does not have a steady 9-to-5 income, but she's got at least two things going for her: an opinion and a passion. She's worked in television, landed in the Writers Guild of America, and found herself feature casting for film projects including “Miami Vice” and “Spider-man 3.”

“Hollywood is like high school,” she says. “Everyone is trying to become the most popular kid in school.” But not Taylor. If she's learned anything, it's been to speak up.



“Nate Torrence is on ‘Studio 60’ because I thought he was right for the part. I wasn't ashamed to say so, and after several auditions he had the part,” Taylor says. “Hollywood is full of personalities, and that often leads people to become ‘yes men.’ Some think that being agreeable will help them be liked, but in the end you've become just another person without conviction.”

In the midst of the hoopla, Taylor finds purpose as a Christian in Tinseltown. “I want Hollywood to know that we are grace-filled followers of Jesus, not just picketers on the corner,” she says.

Lately, Taylor's been thinking about making her own movies. She recently took two weeks to travel to Kayamandi, South Africa, where she shot a short film that she wrote and directed about AIDS. “Shooting the short film started a little bit of a fire in my belly, and I would love to shoot a documentary in a squatter camp in South Africa,” Taylor says.

In the meantime she's looking for her next film to cast — and sharing her ideas every time she's asked.

LIZZA CONNOR BOWEN is chasing her dream job as a singer-songwriter. She once earned \$50 playing at a coffee shop, but that didn't cover the damage done to her Buick during the gig — a bullet hole through the roof.

AMY JACOBS is a writer in Nashville, Tenn., who thought interviewing people for this article was more therapeutic and inspiring than any episode of “The Oprah Winfrey Show” — and she really likes Oprah.