

## The power of positivity

By Annita West Special to the Index | Posted: Wednesday, March 25, 2015 8:00 am

It was just a pile of stones, but Linda MacIsaac turned it into way to relieve stress, a counseling tool, and a unique business. Stones with words are part of her life.

MacIsaac began graduate school at the age of 47 following a corporate career in marketing management.

“I was trying to practice balance with school work,” MacIsaac said.

As she prepared for a seven-hour comprehensive exam with a stack of books three-feet tall, MacIsaac said she felt overwhelmed. She started using paint markers to write and draw on stones. Writing words like “gratitude,” “hope,” “love,” “home” and “peace” brought her the stress relief she was seeking.

As a graduate-level counseling student, an eight-month practicum of volunteer work is required. MacIsaac chose to volunteer at the Women’s Shelter in Corpus Christi.

The room she was given to use was similar to a storage room, so she took items from home to make it a more comfortable environment, MacIsaac said. She brought some of the stones she had created and placed them in a bowl, the uplifting words on display should she need a little encouragement or a smile throughout the day.

One woman came in and picked up a stone that read “hope,” which she held throughout the whole session.

“That’s when I realized,” MacIsaac recalled, “it helped me just to do this activity, and yet just by putting the stone in her hand, it brought her some hope.”

So MacIsaac began bringing stones and paint markers to her sessions for the women to design their own with words meaningful to them.



Linda MacIsaac

Linda MacIsaac displays one of her unique counseling tools. Clients are asked to choose a small stone that defines how they feel or who they are.

This marked the beginning of MacIsaac's unique counseling technique, incorporating the stones. The website [lindamacisaac.com](http://lindamacisaac.com) explains the areas of her counseling specialties.

As a counseling intern volunteer, there is no income or much time for regular part-time employment so the stones also became a business. MacIsaac had made about 350 stones as her own stress relief activity, so she first tried selling those at a local flea market.

The sales she made, including to a counselor and psychologist, encouraged her to pursue marketing her stones. Her stones can now be found in her online boutique at [etsy.com/shop/CornerstoneRocks](http://etsy.com/shop/CornerstoneRocks), which she started in November 2013.

MacIsaac said she started using Etsy in November 2013 just to see what would happen, which was nothing at first.

"If you don't know how to do Etsy, no one is going to find you," she said. "It was a bit of a learning curve on that."

With the addition of options to customize the product, MacIsaac's business has since picked up. Instead of paint pens, she now uses computer-generated words that are transferred to the stones, then sealed with four clear coats. All of her stones are handmade and take a minimum of four days to complete.

After adding customization to Cornerstone Rocks, what began primarily as stones with words of encouragement has become whatever a customer can envision.

She added some sand, shells and sea glass, and now offers a "Beach in a Bag." which has become a popular item.

In September 2014, Mermaid Ranch in Rockport began retailing her shells, stones, gems and the Beach in a Bag.

Some of her more unusual custom orders have been for stones to leave at grave sites, large whelk shells, table place settings instead of name cards, and stones for companies and charities that haven't chosen a specific word to use for team-building.

"I have to be careful with my time on promising too much on Cornerstone because it takes time," MacIsaac said.

As she completes her counseling intern hours, she said she is still trying to balance her life and working on an order for Cornerstone Rocks has provided her with time to separate from dwelling on things that are not in her control.