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Executive Bio
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Mom-turned-CEO Takes Babies, Business to Heart
Hotslings® inventor founds business in necessity

DALLAS/FORT WORTH – As Kristen DeRocha cut out fabric on her kitchen table for her first baby sling, she didn't have visions of warehouses, wholesale fabrics, hired seamstresses, or million-dollar sales. She really just wanted something comfortable and stylish to keep both of her hands free while holding her own child close. Necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention. But necessity also made this mother the head of a multi-million-dollar empire called "Hotslings®."

While being an entrepreneur and business owner may not have been in DeRocha's initial goals, "accessories designer" wasn't a far stretch. DeRocha was raised in a very modest household, as she puts it, in Arlington, Texas, and there wasn't money for fancy, trendy clothes. Instead, DeRocha created unique ensembles of her own, putting her creativity to work at a young age.

DeRocha graduated in the top three percent from Sam Houston High School in Arlington and then graduated Texas A&M University with a bachelor of science in wildlife and fisheries science. She taught high school biology for six years, but always sewed creatively at home as a past time.

After the birth of her first child in 2001, DeRocha became involved in attachment parenting/breastfeeding groups, a method that utilizes baby slings as a parenting tool. DeRocha liked the idea of a pouch-style sling, but was not crazy about the rings on popular, store-bought slings that constantly had to be readjusted. The pouches she purchased without rings were bland, non-creative, didn't fit, and certainly were not comfortable. With a little ingenuity, some funky fabric she had around the house, and a sewing machine, DeRocha made her first baby sling.

When she would wear the sling out and about, DeRocha was bombarded with requests for her sling. She decided to fulfill this niche in the market and began her business, which she called Hotslings to evoke thoughts of something fun and hip for parents to wear. With a website and a lot of word-of-mouth recommendations for her fashionable slings, DeRocha's business exploded.

As the company grew as rapidly as her first child, DeRocha enlisted her husband's help. When DeRocha found herself back in front of her computer just two days after the birth of her second child, she knew she needed even more assistance. She began to outsource the making of her products, but only to her own standards for quality.

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Hotslings

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Today, Hotslings is a multi-million-dollar, multinational company with 14 employees including a fully staffed warehouse team supplying Hotslings to more than 600 stores around the country, in addition to online sales. Most recently, DeRocha appointed Joseph Harris as general manager, who is well known for his experience in global sourcing and product development.

In just four years, this “mom-trepreneur’s” company has gone from \$8,800 in sales the first year to a projected \$4 million in sales this year. Moms agree that holding their babies close to their hearts in a fashionable, comfortable way makes the difference. A great idea and a mind for innovation have turned DeRocha and her Hotslings into hot commodities.

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