

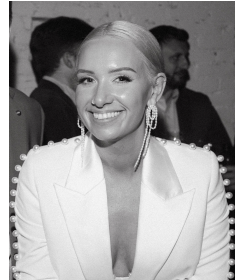


ALUMNAE SPOTLIGHT

PRESENTED BY THE PROFESSIONAL ALUMNAE COMMUNITY

Caroline Espe '11

Owner of Darien & Co; Co-Owner of barre3 Main Line - Berwyn



Can you share a bit about your journey from college to where you are today? How does what you studied in school inform your work today? What inspired you to pursue your current career and start your own business?

After graduating from Sacred Heart in 2011, I attended the University of Miami as a Photojournalism major. It took me one semester to realize that photojournalism wasn't for me, and I quickly transferred into the business school as a Marketing major. I absolutely loved it—I genuinely enjoyed going to class, working on projects, and seeking advice from professors.

After graduating in 2015, I worked at Nordstrom for a few years before moving into the craft beer industry. Working for a small, local craft brewery gave me firsthand experience in the world of small business. I had the opportunity to be hands-on, express my creativity, and see the ins and outs of owning and running a business. While my original dream was to open my own brewery, things quickly shifted in March 2020. The world shut down—and with that, weddings, baby showers, birthdays, and other big events were canceled. I've always been a gift giver, so I started sending curated gift boxes to friends and family whose celebrations had been put on hold. Soon, those same friends and family started asking me to create gifts for their loved ones, and before I knew it, my passion for gift-giving had turned into a business - [Darien & Co.](#)

Within months, I launched an online store and signed a lease for an office space in Downtown Media. While I continued selling individual gift boxes on our website, I also expanded into corporate gifting, landing several large accounts and sometimes shipping out 350+ boxes per order. Corporate gifting quickly became the core of the business, but I found myself missing the creativity that came with retail.

Before taking the leap into a brick-and-mortar storefront, my mom Lori, and I set forth on another business venture together—we purchased [barre3 Main Line - Berwyn](#) in 2022. After working side by side on Darien & Co, we were excited for a new challenge, and barre3 felt like the perfect fit. It has been both rewarding and demanding, but we are beyond grateful for the incredible community and team we have built. They are truly the foundation of our studio.

Shortly after, I made the decision to open our retail storefront in Downtown Wayne, allowing me to balance both the corporate side of the business with my love for curating unique, one-of-a-kind gifts for customers who walk through our doors each day. Owning two businesses has been a whirlwind, but I wouldn't have it any other way!

How do you measure success in your career and personal life?

In my career, I measure success by the connections we build as a business, whether it's with our loyal customers at Darien & Co, the incredible community at barre3 Main Line - Berwyn, or the amazing teams that make both businesses thrive.

Personally, success is about balance and fulfillment. Owning two businesses can be a lot at times, but I feel most successful when I can be present for the people I love, make time for things that bring me joy, and continue to grow in ways that challenge and inspire me. At the end of the day, if I'm building something meaningful and surrounded by great people, I know I'm on the right path.

What advice would you give to women aspiring to follow a similar path in entrepreneurship?

Always advocate for yourself. Always surround yourself with people who you trust and who value your vision. Always be willing to take advice and listen to ideas from your peers. Always be open and receptive to criticism.

How has your business evolved since its launch, and what are your goals for the future?

Since launching Darien & Co and taking over barre3 Main Line - Berwyn, we have grown in ways I'm incredibly proud of. At Darien & Co, we've expanded from an at-home gift box business to a thriving corporate gifting company and retail storefront—something that wouldn't be possible without our amazing team (*including fellow SHA alumna, Gabrielle DiPasquale '12*)! Meanwhile, at barre3, my mom and I have worked hard to strengthen our studio's community, brought on an incredible team, and created a space where people truly feel supported.

Looking ahead, we're excited to continue growing both businesses. One dream for Darien & Co is an eventual summer pop-up at the Jersey Shore, bringing our curated gifts to the beach community. No matter where we go next, our goal remains the same for both businesses: to foster connection, creativity, and a strong sense of community in everything we do.

As a local small business owner, how do you stay connected to and support the community? What is your favorite part about being a local business owner?

I was lucky enough to have been asked to join the board of the Wayne Business Association in the Spring of 2024. It is such an incredible way to stay involved in our community and have the opportunity to collaborate with fellow local businesses. I love being a local business owner because of the connections I get to make with the community. Whether it's getting to know our regular customers at the shop, working with local companies on corporate gifts, or seeing familiar faces at barre3, there's something so special about building relationships with the people around you. I love when customers pop in just to say hi, when I get to be part of their celebrations through thoughtful gifting, or when I see our studio members supporting each other. Being a small business owner isn't just about selling a product or service—it's about being part of something bigger, creating a space where people feel welcome, and growing alongside the community we serve.

Caroline is a multifaceted entrepreneur, owning both Darien & Co, a curated gift boutique, and a barre3 studio with her mom. With years of experience in the craft beer industry and high-end retail, she brings a unique perspective to her ventures. She launched Darien & Co as an e-commerce business in 2020 before expanding to a brick-and-mortar store in June 2023. Passionate about community and customer experience, Caroline strives to blend elegance, wellness, and thoughtful curation in everything she does, including serving on the board of the Wayne Business Association. Outside of work, Caroline enjoys golfing with her husband, traveling with her family, and going on long walks with her dog, Layla.