

# Helping memories take root

## Kittery resident creates gift to grow on

By C. Ayn Douglass

Brent Beckett of Kittery says he has "an idea every day" and that his new business, A Tree Story, is the product of one of those ideas.

Beckett's product appears to be a book from the outside but when it's opened, the box contains a Colorado blue spruce seedling, a hardy tree and one that will grow anywhere, according to Beckett. The inspiration came from Beckett's own experience in trying to find a way to commemorate the life and death of a beloved pet. "I wanted something to continue," he said.

A Tree Story also includes a dozen tiny wooden stars, a nice number, Beckett felt, to make wishes on as the tree is planted, as well as a small bag of "sincerity mixture," a woody combination of shavings, pine cones and glittery sprinkles. The mixture is blended into the soil at the time of planting. Planting a tree, Beckett feels, is making a commitment to it as well as a commitment to life. The tree can be dedicated to the life of a friend, a pet, the birth of a child or to honor a special occasion but the story is told by the recipient in the journal provided with the gift of the book.

"This gift is received and given on an emotional level," Beckett said. "One woman received one at a baby shower along with the stroller and clothes and the stuff that would have been there anyway and she loved it. One couple got one as a wedding gift and told me it was the best gift they had received."

Beckett is a self-described capitalist but wanted to do something that would give back to society and have a positive impact. He thought about all the times while working in marketing and advertising when he wanted to thank a client for their business and how detached he felt when he called in an order for flowers, or sent a box of candy. "I was working in the creative world with creative people who were not applying their creativity in showing their appreciation. I often thought, 'I'll bet these people don't even know what they're sending,'" Beckett recalled.



With two-day-old Victoria Elizabeth Henning sleeping soundly in her mother's arms, parents Troy and Holly enjoy York Hospital's new commemorative gift "A Tree Story" from its creator, Brent Beckett.

York Hospital loves the product so much it is now giving A Tree Story to each new mother as a way to commemorate the birth of her child. Carol Campbell, a nurse at the hospital's birthing center, has given approximately 25 Tree Stories to new mothers since the program began two weeks ago. Campbell, who is always in search of products to give to a new mother was struck by the sincerity and the simplicity of the idea.

"We try to avoid plastic products emblazoned with a logo," she said. "We elected to give a simple gift that is a gift of the heart to celebrate the beginning of a new life. I have fond memories of being in the Maine woods with my grandfather and this simple gift of nature reminds me of that," she said. Campbell encourages the nurses on duty at the time of the birth to write a note or comment about the beauty of that particular baby in the journal that accompanies A Tree Story to mark the event.

Recently, at the birthing center, Troy and Holly Henning were surprised and pleased by a visit by Beckett. As 2-day-old Victoria Elizabeth Henning slept in her mother's arms, Beckett placed A Tree Story on Holly's lap and explained how to plant the tree and made suggestions on what might go into the journal. The couple was moved by the gift and the new dad thanked Beckett with a big grin. Victoria Elizabeth slept on. Campbell has incorporated A Tree Story in other areas of the hospital, as well as the birthing center. She often gives one to patients coming in for diagnostic procedures that take a lot of courage such as initial mammograms and prostate exams. "I'm proud of them for taking that first step," she said.

In York Village, Christine Gambetta of the York Flower Shop was trying to think of a way to commemorate the second anniversary of her father's funeral. "Brent came in with his trees and I just said 'wow.' I had

Photo by C. Ayn Douglass

been planning to plant a tree in his memory anyway and this was a really positive thing to do."

Gambetta, her family and her friends joined together at a celebration of remembrance in North Berwick last month, planted the tree and made a wish on each of the stars. Each of the guests wrote a treasured memory or two about her father in the journal to help make the occasion more memorable. On a recent visit to North Berwick, Gambetta noted the tree is thriving and has sprouted new growth.

It was Beckett's mission to match his ideals and philosophies to real-world employment and make a living in a meaningful way. Each time A Tree Story becomes a gift, Beckett hopes the eloquence of nature speaks to the recipient.

A Tree Story can be found at the York Flower Shop in York Village, Shelton's at York Beach, The Flower Kiosk in Portsmouth or online at [www.Beckettlimited.com](http://www.Beckettlimited.com).