



Web Extra! Full Interview with Helen Anderson

🕒 August 23, 2016 👤 Ali Wilkinson

This month's magazine features an interview with Helen Anderson. We couldn't fit the whole thing there—but we can here! Read on for our complete interview.



Helen Anderson has many titles: ER nurse, mom, inventor and Mrs. Oregon 2016. In 2008, this McMinnville mother of three built a company called Milkies and created the Milk-Saver, a product that helps breastfeeding moms save every drop of milk. After selling the company in 2013, Anderson went back to school to earn a Masters of Science in Nursing. She continues to blog and oversee product development for Milkies.

Q: What was your inspiration for creating the Milkies Milk-Saver?

A: I worked 12-hour shifts as a nurse in a busy emergency room, so I needed a good freezer stash of breast milk. One day I noticed how much I leaked from the non-nursing breast when my son was breastfeeding. I started balancing a bottle under my breast to collect the milk and realized I was wasting two ounces at every feeding. I looked for a product that could collect my milk during the breastfeeding session

and nothing existed. After a few false starts, I designed a prototype, tested it and it worked.

Q: How did you take the next step and turn Milkies into a worldwide brand?

A: I was fortunate to have formed relationships with other moms who were building companies. We partnered up to promote each other, share the costs of advertising and divvy up the cost of public relations campaigns. The mom-entrepreneur community is extremely welcoming and supportive.

Q: Do you have some tips to help moms keep breastfeeding after they go back to work?

A: Nurse on demand to get your milk supply off to a good start. Start pumping and storing milk about four weeks before

returning to work. Don't worry if you don't pump much at first. At work, try to pump as often as your baby eats, or at least every three to four hours. Lactation works on supply and demand, so the more you empty your breast, the more milk you will make.

Q: What has been your focus as reigning Mrs. Oregon?

A: Service as a family activity. We volunteer together in our community with our Cub Scout troop. It's a great way to instill a strong work ethic and get kids in the habit of giving back.

Q: How do you achieve a healthy work-life balance?

A: In the early days of Milkies it was a one-woman show. I had no balance and I am so grateful my husband Brian stuck with me and helped out. Now I have a much better balance. I have a to-do list with the time each task will begin and I put my phone and laptop away when my kids get home from school. My workday has an end time.

Q: Any advice for moms getting pushback from employers about taking time to pump?

A: I'm always sorry to hear about moms being discouraged from pumping at work. The good news is, with few exceptions, your right to pump at work is protected by law. Talk to your employer about the reasons they are unsupportive. If you want to go a step further, educate your employer about the benefits of a policy that supports breastfeeding and pumping. There is a wonderful manual called *The Business Case for Breastfeeding* — Google it and send your supervisor the link or print it out. Even the toughest boss won't be able to deny the data showing the link between family-friendly policies and increased profits.

Q: Why did you choose to compete in the Mrs. Oregon pageant?

A: I'm 38 years old and never considered competing in a pageant until four years ago. My business mentor and friend, Kedma Ough, had done a pageant and shared her positive experience. She has razor-sharp business acumen and an abundance of confidence. I had some success, but I needed more confidence and poise under pressure — I was a nervous wreck if I had to speak to groups and it was holding me back.

Preparing for the Mrs. America pageant (August 27) is very challenging. I am striving to be my best self on that day. I have to have my thoughts organized, message thought out and be in good physical shape.



Ali Wilkinson

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Ali Wilkinson is the Online Editor for PDX Parent, and is one of the founders of PDX Kids Calendar. She loves exploring Portland with her three small children, especially when the explorations lead outdoors, to music or to ice cream. You can read more from Ali at www.runknitlove.com.

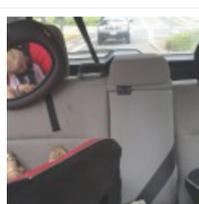
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