

BUSINESS PROFILE

A Family Affair

Arrowhead boutique emphasizes customer service and fashions from a simpler time

To say that **Mariter Torres**, 34, is passionate about Daniela Jay would be an understatement. In fact, the concept for Daniela Jay has been in her head for as long as she can remember; it just took time to flesh out the vision.

"Everywhere we traveled, I could tell Mariter was creating something in her head. She just wasn't ready to tell me what it was," says Mariter's husband, Paul Torres, 35. "She would take a fabric swatch from one country we would visit on vacation and a design element from another. Now when I look at the clothes we carry, I see what she was working on in her head."

Named after their 2-year-old daughter, the store carries women's, maternity, children's and baby clothing. But it isn't the trendy apparel found elsewhere.

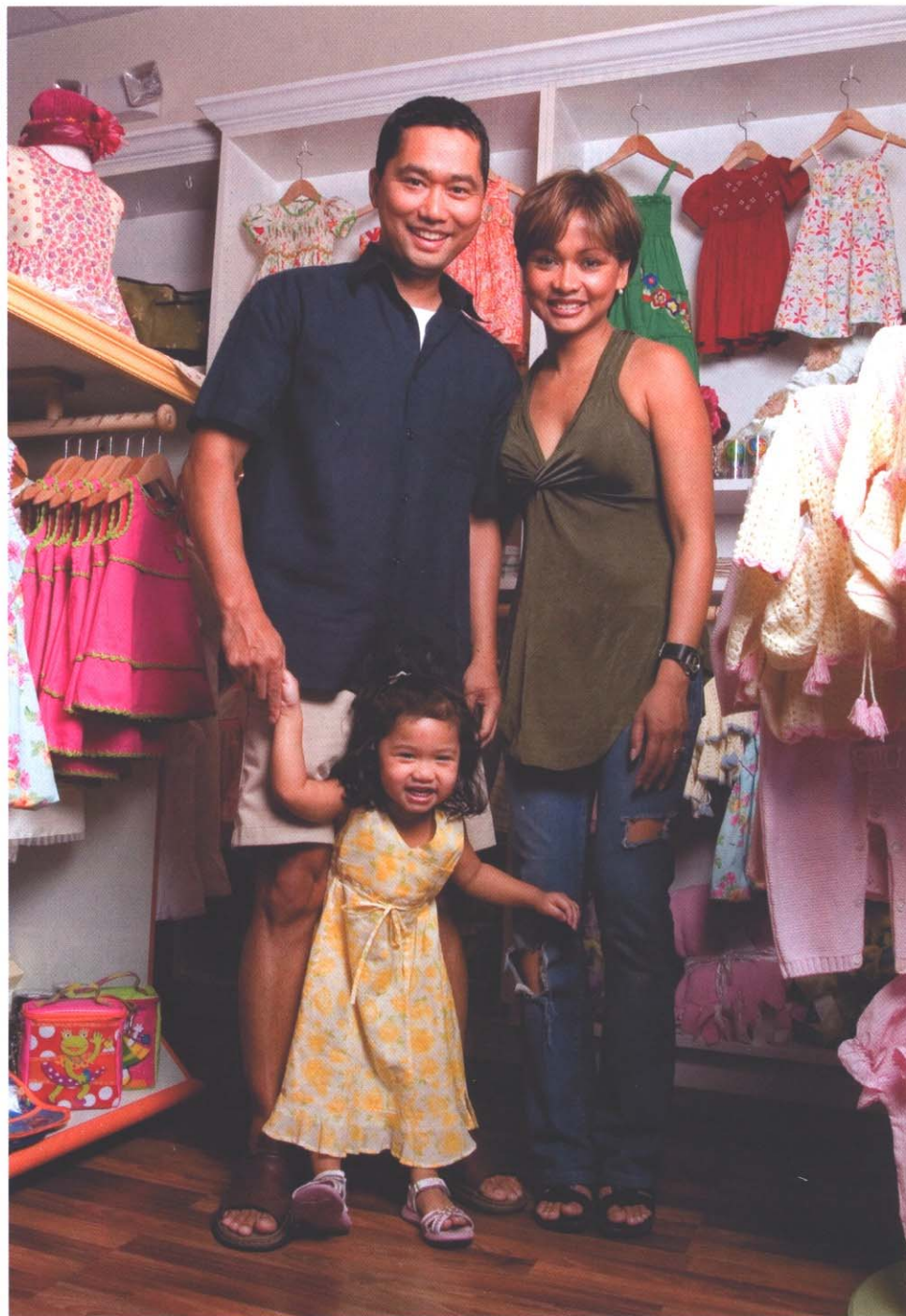
"I have always dressed Daniela Jay in girlie clothes. This is what I wanted our store to offer. The clothing is classic, colorful and beautiful—a bit conservative, but with a twist," Mariter says.

With neither Paul nor Mariter having retail experience, Mariter came up with the concept and Paul followed with the business plan. As a consultant for a local accounting firm, he recognizes the importance of controlled growth. Eventually, he hopes to be able to work for the boutique full-time.

After this summer's opening, the Torreses listened to customers about what was working and what wasn't. Then, in September, Mariter rolled out her own line of girls' clothing. The collection of classic, feminine dresses is designed to make every girl feel special.

"The dresses have to look like someone loved them," Mariter says.

If it sounds like a step back to a simpler time, it's intentional. Born in the same small town in the Philippines, Paul and Mariter's families came to the United States in their teens. Paul moved to Philadelphia, Mariter to Los Angeles. After a reconnection 10 years



JILL RICHARDS

ago, they married and eventually settled in Arrowhead, choosing to keep their boutique local because they missed the mom-and-pop stores of their youth.

They also wanted to keep the type of customer service offered by small retailers.

"I want to offer clothing similar to what I saw my mother wearing in pictures when she was young," Mariter says. "Feminine and simpler than the fashions today. There is just something about that time."

—Sarah Bannan

DANIELA JAY

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Open Monday through Saturday,
10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Children's clothing items range from about \$35 to \$99, while maternity clothing ranges from \$34 to \$85 per piece.