



Ann Sheehan Lipton

To market, to market, to buy a plum bun. Home again, home again market is done.

What sounds like a verse from a poem actually reflects local St. Louis resident **Ann Sheehan Lipton's** day. What often begins early with coffee and the New York Times moves quickly to feeding a menagerie of animals, making breakfast for her family and answering emails before her drive time around 8 a.m.



My week is divided between the store and the farm, located 35 miles west of the city in Augusta, Mo. Here we grow produce, herbs and fruits for Winslow's Home and for CSA's using organic practices. It's difficult to explain the satisfaction one gets from growing food, but it's intoxicating for those of us that do it. I travel to the farm 3 days a week to meet with the farmers, walk the fields, clean the coop, collecting the harvest and eggs for the store. Mid day I return to Winslow's Home to get my arms around the daily challenges that surround a small business before picking up the girls and heading home to oversee homework and make dinner.



I am a lifelong St. Louisan and married mother of two teenage daughters. I met my husband Randy Lipton on a blind date in 1988 and we were married 10 months later. He is smart, kind, generous, and his extraordinary business mind have been pivotal to Winslow's success. And while I don't always want to hear them, I respect his opinions and value his input above anyone else. Just knowing Randy has been an extraordinary gift.

I am a dyed in the wool democrat just like my father, who passed away 2 years ago. My Dad taught me and my 5 brothers and sisters to love the outdoors, and took us to the country every weekend. He lived simply and found joy and pleasure in little things. Through him I became politically aware, and learned the value of an informed opinion. I became an adult that loves my family, my country and my community, working hard to leave them a little bit better.





favorite quote

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

— LEONARDO DA VINCI.

As a lifelong student of the arts, I began my studies focused on fine art but finished college with a degree in design, apprehensive about the prospect of supporting myself as an artist. The following decade I worked in architectural firms doing commercial interiors, finally opening my own design studio in 1989. Many of my clients made the move with me, and I found success specializing in corporate, healthcare, retail, restaurant design, and art acquisition programs. Although I found tremendous satisfaction in the challenges of my profession, I became unexpectedly torn by the tremendous juggling necessary when I became a parent. I was working harder than ever but felt like I was earning a C in both, a difficult outcome for someone committed to excellence. So I finished the jobs I had, sublet my offices, and closed my practice to stay home with my two little girls. For the first time as an adult I stopped wearing a watch and put my filofax on the shelf. While a tough decision at the time, I look back and feel blessed to have been given the opportunity to spend those years with my children.



Around this time a classic old building near our home came on the market. Built in 1924, it had always been a neighborhood grocery store but had fallen into disrepair. Building restoration was something I knew about, so it was purchased to restore as a neighborhood anchor. I felt strongly that the first floor should stay a market that supported the surrounding neighborhood, and while I have no retail experience I understand what we as a family needed in a neighborhood store and that it might resonate with others.

This simple notion is the basis premise for the Winslow's Home concept, a new American General store. We opened in April 2008, and the store is a crazy quilt of merchandise, offering what might just be on my shopping list. Laundry soap, fresh made food grocery, and farm fresh eggs share floor space with produce, kitchenware, toothpaste or sun block, wine, beer, books and gifts.

The store resonates with different sorts of people. College kids study or meet over coffee, and seniors linger over pastries in the morning. Children from the neighborhood come in for lunch, candy or cookies. Dogs and bikes line the front, as do people sitting on the patio enjoying a meal. Winslow's pace is slow, the food fresh and people seem to feel at home, finding the nostalgic air a comfortable place to linger in these uncertain times.



A lot of our time was spent outside, first on walks, and as they got older I often gardened in the back yard while they played. When I wasn't gardening I was reading about it, eventually studying to become a master gardener. When the girls entered elementary school, I would watch them at recess on the playground but was unsettled by what I witnessed. It was hot and hard with few options and offered few options that didn't involve balls. This revelation led to conversations with the principal, and after 3 years of planning and negotiations we installed a large school garden that offered an alternative to the typical asphalt playground experience. The New City School garden is naturalist environment conducive to exploration, quiet contemplation or a chicken fight on the log over the dry creek bed. Not all children wanted to play with balls, and this gave them a piece of the playground.

When the girls entered middle school it felt increasingly awkward that they had only known me as a stay at home mom, as I defined myself in many respects by my professional experiences. So I began to interview for jobs, but it didn't take long to realize the toll that going back to work for someone else would impose on my family. I still wanted to be there when they were sick or just be available for a chat, but the scenarios laid out for me in those meetings would make that difficult, and it was this inflexibility that quickly brought me to the conclusion that I would need to create my own opportunity.





Winslow's Farm is 35 miles west of St. Louis, and where I raise a flock of free range Dominique chickens for the eggs, and grow fruits, herbs, flowers and annual vegetables for market. In addition to allowing me to grow amazing food using organic practices, the farm absorbs all of the scraps from the kitchen, which are fed to the chickens or composted. Our intent is always to minimize waste, an approach that I have lived by throughout my adult life and influences most decisions I make. The products I carry for the retail store are selected for their recyclability, quality of construction, and minimal packaging. I avoid plastics whenever possible and inferior construction, as a good solid kitchen tool should last generations. The kitchen uses only recycled, compostible packaging for carry out and we strive to keep the ingredients seasonal, an approach that lessens the carbon footprint of the menu. Often times it seems like we all have increasingly been encouraged to live with all of these short-term gains that in the end are very costly to our communities, the environment, and our health. I don't really sell Winslow's Home or farm as being green, as approaching life in this manner is not a trend but rules I live by and carry into my business practices. It's the right thing to do.



Remember where you came from

Have informed opinions, but remember that others are entitled to their own.

Learn from your mistakes



As for what the future holds for me, I will continue to keep all of my parenting, partnering, retail, restaurant and farming balls in the air as we all muddle through the worst economy of our lifetime. I hope to continue growing a business that adds value to others, and something I find personally rewarding. It's interesting when people ask if I have any intention of expanding or franchising as that is the current way of business is done, but right now I am only interested in getting this right.

I am proud to have shown my daughters the part of me that works hard, enjoys the intellectual challenge of running a successful business I developed myself and the satisfaction and joy found in simple pleasures. At Winslow's Home we understand how small things can matter most as we watch our customers gobble up fresh baked cookies warm from the oven, or a child who walks down the street all by themselves to buy milk for their mom. We appreciate the exquisite beauty of a carrot pulled from the dirt or a fresh egg laid by a happy chicken we've raised. We celebrate the personal satisfaction a day of hard manual labor at the farm brings, followed by a cold drink of water from the well and a swim in the lake on a hot summer afternoon.

I strive to make each day matter.



WHERE WOMEN CREATE would like to thank Ann Lipton for her involvement in our Winter Issue. To learn more about Ann visit www.winslowshome.com.

