



When the stars align

Nichole Starman and the explosion of multi-hole beads

by Diane Fitzgerald

A new generation of two-hole shapes has taken the beading community by storm. Magazines and books brim with projects that showcase two-hole versatility. Beaders are abuzz about the smoothness of the two-hole beads and have flipped for the security of a second anchor point. "Two-hole beads have moved from curiosity to concept, and onto an art form of their own," says Nichole Starman (above left), product manager at Starman Beads. She should know; she has played a large role in bringing them to the beading industry.

Before marrying into the family, Nichole remembers being blown away by beads on her first visit to the Starman bead warehouse. She and her future husband, Dave, had moved from Idaho to Southern California to attend business school. One weekend, they drove to the Bay Area to visit Dave's uncle Jerry, who had been importing beads since immigrating from the Czech Republic. Jerry promptly put them to work. "My first task was to open a pallet's worth of bead boxes that Jerry had just picked up from the airport. It was thrilling!" Nichole says. From then on, the couple spent weekdays studying and weekends in the warehouse.

After college, Nichole and Dave joined the business full time. "We make a great team," she says. Jerry oversees the factory, Dave built the website and manages the wholesale division, and Nichole is in charge of design, purchasing, and marketing.

She and Dave moved back to Boise to raise their children and while Nichole was at home more with her young boys, she couldn't stop thinking about the design possibilities of two-hole beads. "I spent a lot of time experimenting with

ways to integrate multi-hole beads into seed beadwork," she says. "I have always loved dimensional seed beadwork and found that two-hole beads made it easy to build dynamic, structurally sound designs."

Nichole hit on the idea of making beads with uniform hole placement — a concept that became the foundation of the CzechMates system, which features myriad bead shapes that can easily be used together for unending style options. The first in the series, the two-hole dagger came onto the scene in 2005, followed by two-hole tiles, bricks, lentils, and triangles. In early 2015, the company rolled out the QuadraTile and QuadraLentil four-hole beads and the two-hole bar.

To bring these new beads to market, Nichole assembled a team of designers from around the world — the Starman TrendSetters — to develop patterns and projects. The idea of enlisting the TrendSetters reflects the global vision of Starman, which ships worldwide from distribution centers in Washington state and the Czech Republic.

The TrendSetters help keep the company abreast of bead trends. Meanwhile, back in Boise, Nichole is always looking for the next great idea — and finding ways to keep building the bead buzz. ●

Diane Fitzgerald is an avid beader and collector of vintage two-hole bead necklaces. See her work and patterns on her website, www.dianefitzgerald.com. Visit the Starman wholesale website at www.czechbeads.com.



Go online to www.BeadAndButton.com/extra to get instructions for Nichole's "Cobblestone bangle" (above) in the February issue of *B&B Extra*.



Jerry (left) and David Starman



The Starman factories in Alšovice, Czech Republic (above, left); and Sequim, Washington (above, right).

