

## Warwick entrepreneur's Spherehead pillow targets neck, head pain.

By Jacquelyn Voghel. PBN staff writer.



WARWICK – After a day at her desk job, sleep provided little relief for Alizah Josette when it came to head and neck pain.

“I was a paralegal for nearly seventeen years, and I hold my stress in my neck,” Josette said. “I had this desk job, and I would sleep at night and sometimes wake up in the middle of the night or the morning with migraines.”

Finding a pillow that provided better support seemed like a natural fix. But after trialing available options without relief, Josette determined she'd need to create her own solution.

Five years later, she's bringing that product, Spherehead, to the market.

As the name suggests, Spherehead doesn't look like a typical pillow – instead of the traditional rectangular design, the pillow resembles a partially hollowed-out dome, which Josette says prevents harmful twists and turns while allowing for natural movement during sleep. With that unique design, Josette secured a patent on the product.

Before developing Spherehead, Josette had nailed down the culprit behind her own head and neck pain: A back and side sleeper, she would fall asleep on her back and rotate her head onto her shoulder during the night, straining her already tight head and neck muscles.

But at the time, she found that available options didn't strike a balance between uncomfortable restriction and a lack of support.

Josette hadn't previously considered entrepreneurship, and initially set out to create the pillow for personal use. But she passed a pillow on to a friend's mother who was having similar back and neck pain issues, and received rave reviews.

With that experience, "I realized there were other people in need of a similar product as well," Josette said.

Josette spent around five years developing the pillow while continuing to work her desk job, and left the paralegal profession at the beginning of this year to pursue Spherehead fulltime. She currently has a few thousand pillows on standby, which she sells on Amazon for \$59.99 each. Josette self-funded the venture for most of its existence, she said, and just this year secured a Small Business Administration loan.

Still in its early stages, Josette hasn't yet expanded to include the variety of sizes and types of memory foam she's envisioned to broaden the product's audience. But she's had around 100 people test prototypes over the past few years of development, and intends to eventually offer Spherehead in soft and hard foam options.

With the pillow, Josette says her own neck "has never felt better," and that her overall sleep and posture have improved. But there's sometimes a brief adjustment period among users, she says.

"Some people love it from night one, but sometimes it takes three nights or up to a week," Josette said, likening initial discomfort to sensations that people might feel the first time they go for a massage or start physical therapy.

In addition to her online sales, Josette is also looking to partner with chiropractors and other health care professionals whose clients could benefit from Spherehead. She already has at least one chiropractor on board, with Michael J. Gottfried of Newport vouching for the pillow as one that "completely changed both my sleep experience and daily sense of wellbeing," Gottfried said in a statement.

In addition to its ergonomic features, the pillow is compatible with sleep apparatus such as CPAP machines and sleep masks, and comes with a charmeuse pillowcase to support healthy hair.

Josette currently manufactures the product overseas to keep costs down, she said, though her end-goal is to establish her own factory in Rhode Island.

"I'd really like to have full control over my product from the manufacturing phase," she said. But for now, the initial product launch keeps her busy.

“I didn’t realize all the hoops I would have to go through to get to this point, all the hurdles,” Josette said. “There are constant bumps in the road, but you just keep circumnavigating and moving forward.”

*For more information, visit <http://www.SphereheadPillow.com>.*