

# La Vie Est Belle: Inspiring Giving and Beautiful Living

By Allison Lund-Zalewski



Looking for a unique gift, simple and meaningful home décor, or beautiful items for babies or kids? La Vie Est Belle, a family-owned online storefront based in Lake Elmo, inspires its shoppers to give to others.

Kristin Rehkamp, owner, opened La Vie Est Belle after her 12-year-old daughter suddenly fell ill in September 2020. The Rehkamps' daughter was hospitalized for nearly two months and their life and perspective changed suddenly after their daughter was diagnosed with a mental illness. In March 2021, the business officially opened, and their story continues to unfold.

"La Vie Est Belle is a labor of love as a result of our journey with our daughter that has pivoted our lives and opened our eyes. I am an interior designer with a retail background, so the store feeds my soul while being home with my children. The store also allows us to donate money to non-profits supporting children's mental health initiatives in bigger and more diverse ways. Twenty percent of our net profits are donated to non-profits supporting children's mental health awareness and education," Kristin explained.

Although Kristin and her husband may never understand the "why" behind their journey with their daughter, they do believe all things happen for a reason. They are hopeful their family will lend a strong and positive voice for families and those serving our communities working to break down barriers, raise awareness, and make a difference in the lives of those braving mental illness. As they advocate for their daughter, they look forward to evolving mental health/well-being thinking and care models for those who journey with them. La Vie Est Belle was born out of the desire to inspire giving and kindness, to tell their story, and be a voice or community for others while simultaneously bringing joy to people and homes. They are choosing their own path to happiness and hope to inspire others.

Kristin is excited to grow her local connection, support, and involvement. Although they are currently online only, she hopes to one day have a downtown Lake Elmo storefront. She and her family continue to focus on how they serve the community, their friends, and their neighbors. The store is currently offering front-door delivery and gift wrap at no charge.

"We delivered last-day-of-school teacher appreciation gifts on behalf of local families and participated in the Third Annual Lake Elmo National Night Out (NNO). We sponsored a delightful paper lantern activity for children—my mom and daughter get all the credit!" Kristin exclaimed.

Kristin has always wanted to own a little gift and home décor store as an opportunity to create and bring joy to others. She reflected on all the things that had held her back from chasing her dream. Inspired by her family and a journey that pivoted their lives, she realized that the only thing to lose was trying. Kristin knows the store is a gift from her oldest daughter, reminding her how precious and short life is.

"I also wanted to stand for something and inspire others...an opportunity to make a difference. Finally, I yearned for work/life integration...and not just in theory or attempt...but true integration," Kristin said.

Kristin shares her whole story on her blog, [lavieestbelle.live/blog](http://lavieestbelle.live/blog), to educate, empower, and strengthen other families.

Kristin's message to her community is: "One in five youth brave a mental illness. Often these conditions are misunderstood or misdiagnosed. An illness that can present (like any other illness) suddenly and without warning. We are hopeful Lake Elmo residents might enjoy shopping our store to brighten their day or the day of a friend, family member, or neighbor. We also hope local friends and neighbors might believe in and support their mission and partner with those serving the community working to break down barriers, raise awareness, and make a difference in the lives of those braving mental illness."

Kristin and her husband, Tom, have been together for 13 years. Tom is the Director of Facilities and Security at Hubbard Broadcasting. He serves on the Lake Elmo Village Preserve Home Owners Association. He is often found at LiftBridge CrossFit, often before Kristin and the kids are even up in the morning. Kristin serves on the PrairieCare Fund Board of Directors. PrairieCare Fund is a non-profit grant-making foundation with a mission to improve the health and well being of communities. The fund is designed to promote the awareness of children/adolescent mental health services, advocating for those in need, reducing stigma, educating professionals, and creating opportunities for our communities to advance the delivery of health services.

Inspired by their daughter, the Rehkamps were hoping to raise \$2,000 to provide bears and blankets for the children and adolescents in residence at the PrairieCare Mental Health Hospital in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. However, this past holiday season, they raised \$14,000, exceeding their goal. As a result of the unbelievable generosity of their community of family and friends, the PrairieCare executive team asked the family to customize and fund a bear every child would receive upon admission to their hospital(s) moving forward.

"We look forward to providing this healthcare organization 1,200 custom 'Prairie Bears' this upcoming holiday season in partnership with DEMDACO. It is through this journey and my relationship with DEMDACO, that a new vendor relationship grew. La Vie Est Belle was born out of a collective partnership to do something meaningful for children, adolescents, and families," Kristin said.

Be sure to check out La Vie Est Belle's website at [lavieestbelle.live](http://lavieestbelle.live) for beautiful gifts, home décor, and items for babies and kids. Feel good about your purchases and make a difference for children, families, and your community.

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la vie est belle

life is beautiful

Dear You,  
Love the place  
our hearts call home.

Visit [lavieestbelle.live](http://lavieestbelle.live)

**La Vie Est Belle is a Lake Elmo based online storefront with a mission to INSPIRE GIVING and BEAUTIFUL LIVING**

Inspired by our own journey, 20% of our net profits are donated to non-profits supporting children's mental health awareness and education.

Happy giving!