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MERYL SCHENKER / P-I

Seattle women, from left, Krisha CatZen, Jackie Koney, Deidre Silva and Elisabeth Squires took different paths to fulfillment.

They pursued their dreams to success

2 books and a pole-dancing school

EDITOR'S NOTE: The women mentioned here were profiled in separate stories in 2006. This is an update.

BY ATHIMA CHANSANCHAI
P-I reporter

More than a year ago, four Seattle women set out to pursue their dreams. Today, two books and a thriving pole-dancing school show how these women — armed with not much more than a lot of gumption and an eye for niche interests — have succeeded when others might have called it a day.

One wrote an “owner’s manual” on breasts.

Two friends worked as a team to introduce more women to baseball.

One quit a job as a receptionist in a downtown law firm once her pole-dancing school — Seattle’s first — gained enough traction for her to teach full time.

While they took different paths to get to their different dreams, one thing unites them: the desire to empower other women and girls. A fringe benefit is that their stories provide inspiration for others to follow their dreams.

For Elisabeth Squires, aka the Boob Lady, the book “bOObs:

ON THE WEB

► Elisabeth Squires:
booksonboobs.com

► Deidre Silva/Jackie Koney:
savvygirlsofsummer.com

► Krisha CatZen:
poleforthesoul.com

A Guide to Your Girls” was her dream come true.

“If you’re going to dream, you might as well dream big,” said Squires, 51. “It’s just as much work to dream small.”

Since its release in October, the book has nearly sold out its first printing. (Ten thousand copies from an indie press is typical for a first-time author). Beyond that, writing and researching the book has given her opportunities she wouldn’t have otherwise encountered. She has appeared on “Good Morning America” and at book tour events in Chicago, New York and San Francisco.

For Squires, talking to young girls, adolescents and other women has really been a revelation. As the mother of three — one of them a girl — it’s important to

SEE DREAMERS, C2

DREAMERS: Reaping the rewards

FROM C1

her to help girls appreciate their bodies and boost their self-esteem. Doing research for the book kept her busy updating information and resources on her active Web site and blog, to which a community of women has flocked to talk about two of the things they have in common – their breasts.

Squires said these are experiences she would have missed had she not come to the halfway point of the book and realized she could make it through.

"You can see the light at the end of the tunnel," she said.

That light finally has shone for Deidre Silva, 40, and Jackie Koney, 41, who spent thousands of dollars to attend spring training 2006 in Arizona to get material for a book about baseball for women, by women. It was a risky undertaking: no publisher had accepted their proposal at that point.

"We're just battling the man," Silva said recently. "Sometimes it's a dream, sometimes you go along because it's a dream and sometimes what propels us is spite. You just want to show them. I want to do this because they tell us we can't."

They figured they'd write it and a publisher would come.

One finally did – on Silva's birthday, and a week after the two had "broken up" as a book team.

Their book, "It Takes More Than Balls: The Savvy Girls' Guide To Understanding and Enjoying Baseball" (Skyhorse Publishing), is scheduled for an April release – to coincide with the beginning of baseball season.

"I never really dreamed of this," said Silva, a freelance writ-

"Sometimes what propels us is spite. You just want to show them. I want to do this because they tell us we can't."

– Deidre Silva, on writing a women's guide to baseball

er. "It was just a matter of saying, 'Let's do something fun.'"

Fun is something the process hasn't always been, but, like Squires, the co-authors say the women they've met have made an impact on them.

"They're always the ones giving us the best ideas," Silva said. "Their dreams become our dreams."

As the Savvy Girls of Summer, Silva and Koney organized all-women events at Safeco Field. There they learned how to score a game, facts about the game, player stats, etc. They met players, too.

Their events started with an informal focus group of 14. Next time it was 40, then 80, then more than 100. This past season their numbers shot up to 750 – 750 women who have a lot of influence on how a family's entertainment budget is spent.

"The time is absolutely right. I have a virtual file cabinet about what NASCAR and football are doing to lure women fans," Silva said, "but I don't have one on baseball. What I do have are mostly articles about us."

Silva, a mother of two, and Koney, also married but not a mom, put their lives on hold and spent every day, including weekends, working to make their deadline. While they physically work in different offices, they'd meet often to split up their duties, working as well as a million-dollar ballclub.

"People can relate to two

friends doing things together," Silva said. "That's a lot of power. . . . I'm so glad I'm not doing this alone. Any of us alone would've given up."

Koney loved doing the research for the book, becoming a sponge for the game's history and anecdotes, while handling marketing and other money issues. While Silva is the "voice" of the book, Koney's impact is undeniable, especially now that they're rounding third base.

"Deidre says it's a lot like giving birth," Koney said. "I don't have any kids, but maybe it's a bit like planning a wedding, which I have experienced."

"There's the initial, completely emotional bliss about the idea, then the tasks that seem never-ending, the multitude of opinions about what it should be like, the buildup/excitement leading up to the big day, the 'Oh, #%)(*\$#, what am I doing?' phase, the thrill of the big day, and then the realization that it's over and you don't remember much, but you have a lot of bills left to pay. Thank goodness for pictures and friends that remind you it was a fantastic party and well worth the effort."

Krishna CatZen, 40, had her own support network of friends and family to bolster her dream of opening Seattle's first stand-alone pole-dancing school.

"If you put the word out there to your friends, they'll help," she said. "Start small. The best thing I did was doing it two

nights a week after work and not quitting. Let it grow organically. If you're doing what you're meant to do the universe will send you that way."

With advice from a small business association for women, she started her school in April 2006 and by August of that year she was teaching full time. Now she does six classes six days a week, with a mixture of introductory and advanced levels. She's even training other instructors. Each course runs six weeks, and with no more than six students in a class it's a safe and intimate experience.

But it's not about producing the next generation of exotic dancers. CatZen's classes are about empowering women to feel good about their bodies and to embrace their sexuality in a positive way.

Of her students, some of whom have performed during amateur nights at local clubs, CatZen said, "I'm so proud of them."

More to the point, the experience she has gained as a first-time teacher has transformed her life.

"I have so much pride, so much self-worth, so much hope with every circumstance of my life when you know you're the master of your own destiny," CatZen said. "It's been very humbling. I have a way to bring joy to people. I feel so confident walking down the street. It's a complete 100 percent turnaround. I do something I'm good at. It's a huge difference from being a cog in the wheel."

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Elisabeth Squires
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