

Mother of Invention

DANIELLE DIETZ-LIVOLSI'S NUTTY CONCOCTION HELPS ORPHANS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

SPREADING THE LOVE

In honor of orphans like her sons, Greg and Matthew, Danielle launched a nonprofit companion, Project Left Behind (PLB) provides food, education, clothing, and more to orphans worldwide. One percent of NuttZo's net proceeds fund PLB. "We've donated more than \$100,000 to nine international orphanages."



IN 2002 DANIELLE AND HER HUSBAND, KEVIN, TRAVELED FROM SAN DIEGO TO THE UKRAINE TO ADOPT 3½-YEAR-OLD GREG.

Malnourished from life in an orphanage eating nothing but porridge, Greg wore size 18-month clothing and barely reached the 5th percentile for height and weight. "He was always smiling and would play Legos for hours, but he'd only eat mushy foods—bananas, maybe pasta."

So Danielle busted out her food processor. "I knew nut butters were the most nutrient- and protein-dense food, but Greg needed a food with high amounts of alpha-linolenic acid (crucial to development) and a complete protein, meaning it has all nine essential amino acids." She added flaxseed oil to a base of organic peanuts, cashews, and Brazil nuts and dabbed

a schmear on a banana slice. Greg ate it. Then he ate some more. Within a few months, his cheeks had plumped and his hair had filled in. A year later, he'd hit the 15th percentile. When she and Kevin



TAKE YOUR PICK
ORIGINAL PEANUT (NOW PEANUT PRO) HAS FIVE NUTS AND TWO SEEDS; POWER FUEL IS PEANUT-FREE.

adopted a second son, Matthew, in 2005, he, too, thrived on her superfood concoction.

One night while doing dishes, Kevin complained about how hard it was to get the nut butter out of the food processor. "Why don't you just buy this stuff?" he asked. I said, "You can't." That was our aha moment." Over the next year, Danielle perfected the recipe, and in 2008 she quit her job as a radio sales executive to focus on getting NuttZo into stores.

After her local Jimbo's... Naturally! started selling it, Danielle aimed big: Whole Foods Market. She road-tripped 110 miles to deliver the product to the Southern Pacific region buyer. His rejection led her to make NuttZo truly ready to market, complete with a tamper-resistant seal. A fellow entrepreneur clued her into pitching a local Whole Foods because managers can purchase products made within a 100-mile radius. "I went to my La Jolla store and gave my 60-second elevator pitch. The buyer bought in on the spot."

The key to her success: Authenticity and practicality. "I was solving a common problem parents have, and I had a compelling story about how it worked. My passion came through."

READY, SET, START UP

1 HAVE A LASER-FOCUSED MISSION STATEMENT.
"When faced with a big decision, look to it for guidance. For example, if quality ingredients are central, don't go low-quality to cut costs. Create a smaller product instead."

2 ENLIST SOMEONE TO HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE.
"This can come in many forms: a business coach, a women's business networking group, a friend. Meet weekly or monthly, and have three tasks you must cross off for each time."

3 GET FANS ON BOARD.
"I took Lululemon's ambassador program as inspiration and recruited competitive athletes who love NuttZo to promote us on social media. That's more compelling than me handing out coupons." ■