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How to preserve kids' hands, feet

Cast from the past

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If you've ever strained to remember what your children's tiny toes looked like when they were born, or how big your son's hands were the first time he pitched a no-hitter, Michelle Atanasoff can help.

Her business, Precious Wee Piggies, creates sculptures by casting the hands and feet of children. She learned the craft in Canada but recently moved to the East Valley.

Parents are always looking for a way to preserve memories of their children, Atanasoff says, and her LifeCasts are a unique way of doing it. She has made casts for children of all ages, and even pets.

"I've had parents ask me to go to the hospital when babies are only hours old to make casts of their feet," says Atanasoff. "Those are some of the best ones because they are so wrinkly and cute."

She works out of her home in Maricopa, but travels anywhere in the East Valley to make the casts.

The molds for the sculptures are created using a nontoxic material that Atanasoff says is harmless to children. The hands or feet are placed into the "bathwater-warm liquid" and in 20 to 30 seconds it turns into a soft rubbery mold. The child can then easily slip the hand or foot out of

the mold.

The price of the casts

starts at \$35. A project can take three to six weeks to complete, depending on how complicated it is.

Atanasoff says she loves that she is able to create a work of art for parents to remember the stages of their children's lives, but what she always remembers about each project is the look on the child's face when they place their hand or foot in the molding material.

"I tell them it's going to be goopy, and they like that," she says. "But then they put their hand in there, and they always look back up at me with a look that says, 'What is this?' They usually laugh."

Susan Lake, who lives in Ahwatukee Foothills, went to Atanasoff's house when her daughter Reiley was 12 days old. She found out about the castings after meeting Atanasoff at Target.

"Michelle was so kind and gentle, and didn't rush us through the process," says Lake, who had Atanasoff make a shadow box with castings of Reiley's feet and hands.

"It was well worth the money," says Lake, "and something that I will cherish forever and then pass along to Reiley for her to have as a keepsake, too."

Resource

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MICHELLE ATANASOFF