



**HANDCRAFTED:** Memorial resident and entrepreneur Carmen Armstrong has a passion for handcrafted silver jewelry. **DAVE ROSSMAN** / FOR THE CHRONICLE

## Resident loves handcrafted items

### ■ Mexican jewelry inspires Memorial businesswomen

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Carmen Armstrong knows all about love at first sight.

That was the Memorial Villages resident's response the first time she encountered the handcrafted silver jewelry made in Taxco, Mexico, two years ago.

"The pieces were extremely unique," said Armstrong, 50.

"Many were based on pre-Colombian motifs. I saw this, and I was completely captivated."

Armstrong was so taken with the jewelry that she made it the focus of her career. She left her job in medical sales last year to create her own online business, Adornments Unlimited, and spread the word about this handcrafted jewelry.

Adornments Unlimited offers vintage Mexican silver jewelry, reproductions of the vintage pieces and original silver designs. After one year of business, Armstrong is confident she's doing the right thing.

"It's exciting, and it's definitely a wave of the future," she said.

"I just love the thrill of it. Whenever I get a call, I never know who it will be from."

Armstrong already had a great appreciation for Latin American culture before her introduction to Taxco jewelry.

"When she was 18 she spent a

### CARMEN ARMSTRONG

■ **Age:** 50

■ **Community connection:** Memorial resident

■ **Quick quote:** "When people see the jewelry designs, they react very favorably. It's very joyful for me." — Carmen Armstrong

■ **Fast fact:** During its heyday, Taxco, Mexico was a popular tourism spot for the rich and famous, from author Aldous Huxley to actors Jack Palance, Bette Davis and Marilyn Monroe, among others, Armstrong said.

month immunizing people in Bolivia with Amigos de las Americas, a nonprofit human services organization.

Armstrong went on to make numerous vacation trips to Mexico as an adult, and in 2004, she traveled there a member of Los Amigos de Arte Popular, an organization that promotes the folk arts of Mexico.

That's when Armstrong saw handcrafted pieces from what she describes as the "golden age of jewelry" in Taxco, the 1930s through the 1970s.

"It was completely different than anything I'd seen before," Armstrong said.

"It has a highly stylized look."

For her business, Armstrong seeks those who were making jewelry in Taxco during its golden age, along with younger silversmiths age 60 and under. She travels regularly to Taxco about 100 miles southwest of Mexico City.

She also has been accepting speaking engagements to teach people about Taxco, its artists and their creations. She recently spoke for Amigos del

Arte Popular and the Women's Leadership Forum in Brenham.

Her ultimate goal is to build a new base of customers for Taxco's silversmiths.

Their jewelry was quite popular among the rich and famous during Taxco's heyday, but is not as well known today.

Friend Anned Muse of Memorial is a fan of Taxco jewelry, too. She has traveled with Armstrong to Taxco, where they befriended Sigi Pineda, one of the few surviving master jewelry designers and artists from the golden era.

"Carmen has gotten really involved in learning about Taxco's history and the artisans," Muse said.

"We're both interested in helping this art survive."

### AT A GLANCE

For more information about Armstrong's business or lining her up to speak, visit [www.adornmentsunlimited.net](http://www.adornmentsunlimited.net), e-mail [Carmen@adornmentsunlimited.net](mailto:Carmen@adornmentsunlimited.net) or call 832-563-3192.