

# The People Behind Paperific

By Emily McQueen

*The Melbourne Paperific Expo has been a mainstay in Australia's papercraft industry for more than a decade, but it isn't run by a big exhibition company as you might expect. Rather, you'll find a small group of passionate papercrafters at its helm – this is the little expo with a whole lot of heart!*



The Paperific Staff – Left to right Roby Sainsbury-Vale, Lizzy Noakes, Heather Ramsden, Janine Rawlins, Lynn Dwyer and Naomi Swan.

Paperific was founded by Stacey Apeitos in 2000, with Naomi Swan taking the reins in 2009. Naomi has always been crafty, but first started scrapbooking and cardmaking when living in Canada. "I think I love stamping and cardmaking the most – I don't have a lot of time to scrapbook, so I usually go on an annual retreat and whip up several layouts over a weekend. I've also been on two scrapbooking trips – one to Ireland and another to Vietnam and Cambodia", she muses.

A lot goes into organising each Paperific, "I pretty much do all the behind-the-scenes planning for the expo", Naomi explains, "from venue and equipment hire, floor plan design and exhibitor services, to advertising, social media campaigns and promotions. I work with graphic and web designers and consult with crafty friends for new ideas to implement". With two events per year, the workload ebbs and flows. "The time I spend on Paperific ranges from a couple of hours a week when we're six months out, to full-time hours in the weeks leading up to opening day. The month of the expo is my busiest time," she adds.

Impressively, Naomi juggles all this with full-time work as a registered nurse at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital. She specialises in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, caring for babies and children with anything from pneumonia to liver transplants and heart surgery. "Each shift is completely different to the previous depending on the patient," she says. "Being involved in some of the most stressful times in a family's

life is an amazing experience. You connect with people in a different way than you do in everyday life. It can be extremely stressful looking after critically ill children, however it's very satisfying when we see them overcome their illness and get discharged home."

Naomi has also been able to incorporate her passion for papercraft into her work life. "I've personally donated and organised donations from craft companies for PICU memory keeping", she says. "When I first started at the Children's Hospital eight years ago, they were just using blue ink pads for hand and foot prints when we lost a patient. Where I worked in Canada, we did embossed prints and they were so pretty, so I arranged and implemented a change in practice. It's really important to me that final memories are preserved in a nice way. But not only do we do this for these sad times, we also love to celebrate as well. A couple of nurses and I make cards for Birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day. We give a nice card to the family from their child and they love these treasured memories."



Once the expo is up and running, Naomi and her team have a lot of fun!



Naomi with Roby Sainsbury-Vale's miniature creation.



Naomi working at the Royal Children's Hospital.



Naomi Swan and Roby Sainsbury-Vale, lifelong friends from their passion for Paperific.

Joining Naomi in her Paperific duties is her right-hand woman Roby Sainsbury-Vale, who's been an integral part of the team since its beginnings. "Roby is always just a phone call away when I'm in the planning stage, or when any issues arise. It's great to have someone to bounce ideas off who has experience and history with the expo."

Roby too has a rewarding day job, working at Vision Australia's Felix Library. Her work is both busy and creative as she handles the day-to-day running of the library as well as the design and production of Felix Kits – Braille and tactile books for children who are blind. The kits are distributed to families and teachers Australia-wide and contain a picture book annotated with Braille, an audio recording, handmade tactual aids to help the child enter the world of the story and a small handmade handbook with tactile graphics so that children can tell the tale to themselves or others. "Working alongside the families and getting feedback from parents of the children's love and enthusiasm for these resources is inspiring," Roby remarks. "Last year, at Felix's 10th birthday celebration, one young member gave a speech on her love of the library and how she had personally benefited from it – she was 10-years-old and it was a wonderful moment for us all."

In her spare time, Roby is a member of the Victorian Association of Miniature Enthusiasts and uses the unique products that can be found at Paperific Expos to create 1/12-scale dioramas. She displays her pieces at Paperific and even made Naomi a shoebox-size papercrafting scene that sits on the front counter. "There is a huge crossover that complements both my work and art," Roby says. "Miniatures feed my imagination for creating pictures tactually, which in turn increases my hands-on skills for the precise work."

You may be forgiven for thinking that indulging in a creative passion as a side-job is all fun and games – but of course there is so much to do! Naomi says being a shift worker helps to fit things in, "I can work weekends and nights at the hospital and usually take time off in the lead-up to each expo – and I always need a week off after to recover. The expo is extremely stressful – all the responsibility is on me."

Along with Roby, Naomi has a small band of friends who she met through stamping who work Paperific's 'front of house'. "Although I do all the pre-planning for each expo, I really couldn't run it without the support of my friends and family," she says. "These ladies are my biggest support system; they each take time out from their regular jobs to help me at Paperific." These helpers include: Janine Rawlins, a midwife and passionate Stampin' Up! consultant; Heather Ramsden, a medical secretary and part-time cardmaking teacher; Lizzy Noakes, a passionate papercrafter, long-time member of the Paperific team, mum to two talented boys and actively involved in the Scout movement; and Lynn Dwyer, also a long-time member of the Customer Service team, who is now retired and well-known in the papercraft industry. Naomi's family also travels from Queensland to help out – including her brother Brendon, who runs the exhibitors' services.

"Once the show has begun and it's running smoothly, we all have so much fun handing out prize bags and enjoying the atmosphere," says Naomi. "Everyone involved in Paperific is very passionate about papercraft – it's what sets us apart from other expos." With enthusiasm like that, it's no wonder their motto is 'Heaven on Earth for Papercraft Lovers'.



Paperific is held twice a year – the next event is August 29-31, 2014 at the Melbourne Showgrounds.

Tickets are sold at the door: Adults: \$12, Concession card holders & full-time students: \$10, with under 12s FREE. Three-day passes are also available.

For more information, visit [www.paperific.com.au](http://www.paperific.com.au)

Paperific graphic by [www.designsquared.com.au](http://www.designsquared.com.au)

Paperific website design by [www.samanthaworks.com](http://www.samanthaworks.com)