

a beautiful  
career.  
a beautiful  
life.

pink®

## karen trilevsky AS TOLD TO KATE CARTER

*Once homeless, trading pastries for showers and haircuts, Karen Trilevsky today owns FullBloom, a Northern California baking company that generates \$35 million annually, provides college scholarships for children in the community, and employs 200.*

**I RAN AWAY WHEN I WAS 17** – I grew up in a dysfunctional family in Los Angeles and I knew I had to go. I could *not* take it. After I left, there were times when I had no money. None. And I was hungry. I used public transportation and worked multiple jobs. It was scary, but at least I felt I had control of my life.

**I'D WORK 16 HOURS A DAY** – I peeled avocados at a Mexican restaurant until 4 o'clock in the morning. I lied about my age and name to get the job. I learned everything, from how to deal with all kinds of people to how to run a business. I stayed in an apartment with six other people who worked in the restaurant. It was a cast of characters – drinking and drugs, but nothing very different than kids in dormitories.

**I DIDN'T HAVE A HOME** – I didn't have the resources to have a place to live. It was really scary. When first I started FullBloom, my baking company, I put my oven and my mixer in the back of my pickup truck and moved to my own space. I slept on flour sacks – which mold to your body. I traded baked goods for showers at a local gym, for gas and haircuts. I never had any money. I cooked from 4 p.m. until 4 a.m., and then spent five hours making deliveries. There was no backup, and I really didn't know if I would make it or not.

**I NEVER LOOKED BACK** – I'm shy, so the company grew mostly by word of mouth — I never had to

go out and knock on doors. The success of the company today amazes me. We provide 200 fresh-baked goods to 1,100 companies. I have a relationship with farmers and growers and use all-natural ingredients.

**I'M FOCUSED ON THE NEXT GENERATION** – My scholarship fund is paying for 25 kids to

go to college. The company also pays for extracurricular classes, like karate, swimming, and art, for my employees' children. We have classes for employees, everything from yoga to English. And once a month, we take all the employees to a museum, or an aquarium. We think we can change the lives of the next generation. ♣

