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MY SPECIALTY

Each month in 2011, we're asking a local expert for advice on how to become better at just about everything. Here, author **Cindy Zimmermann**, an advocate of the handwritten note (who writes five a day!), shares what to do when you pick up a pen.

GETTING STARTED IS MOST IMPORTANT Writing talent can be important, but the courage to put pen to paper is most important. A writer is being open to exposing oneself to the receiver of the handwritten note and willing to have one's handwriting, thoughts, process of thoughts and grammar put in a document that could last forever.

FOCUS ON THE PERSON YOU ARE WRITING TO Share a special memory, common goals, cheers for their successes and, most profoundly, empathy when someone is in an uncomfortable life situation.

INCLUDE AN EXTRA My extra is a sprig of rosemary; it symbolizes the remembrance of friendship.

UNDERSTAND THAT A "THANK YOU" IS ONE OF THE GREATEST NOTES ONE CAN WRITE Why? Because it indicates you have something to be grateful for. The simple act of saying "thank you" in writing to someone every day has huge emotional, psychological benefits.

KEEP IT SIMPLE The simplest of phrases can be the most profound. "I care" are two of the most profound words I believe to be in our English language when said with sincere feeling. Build on your writing skills. It is an investment in your personal success both professionally and personally.

For more information on Zimmermann and handwriting tips, visit www.writingstyle.com.



FOREIGN EXCHANGE

A gal sometimes needs exotic earrings to accompany her simple bikini or sundress. Seattle-based **Maria Carter** is known for her handmade jewelry which is inspired by the ornamentation, motifs and striking color combinations of ancient cultures. Each delicately designed piece is made using 14- and 22-karat gold vermeil, fine and sterling silvers and high-quality gemstones. www.mariasjewelrydesigns.etsy.com.

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