

The Summit

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View from the Avenue

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS: Lillians on Grand “The Hippest Shoppe in Town” Might Also Be the Most Fun

By Victoria Perkins



Walking into Lillians on Grand Avenue, I am greeted by a chorus of “Hey!” and “Hello!” A few customers are ringing up their purchases and chatting with owner Patti Winger.

“I like this,” says one woman, gesturing to the applique design on my shirt. It is precisely this kind of exuberance and friendliness that makes Lillian’s so special, according to Ms Winger.

“We offer a really fun shopping experience. When ladies come inside, they are personally welcomed by an owner and offered a cup of coffee and a sweet treat,” said Winger. The store also has a healthy sense of humor about being a female-oriented shop that rarely sees men. “If a man is brave enough to wander in, we ring a big cow bell, yell ‘Ladies, there’s a man in the store,’ and guide him to a comfortable man chair.”

This sense of humor is not the only thing that sets Lillian’s apart from other stores. Lillian’s is an “occasional-sale” store, which means that it is only open for part of the week. All year round, Lillian’s is open Thursday through Sunday on the first weekend of the month and Saturday and Sunday for the rest of the month. When the store is closed, it receives new merchandise and is stocked up for the next opening.

“Each time customers come to visit us, they see something new,” explained Winger. “Also, what you see is what you get, meaning we don’t have a warehouse full of inventory to pull from.” This means that Lillian’s clientele are ensured of purchasing unique - and affordable - pieces that “they won’t see on every street corner,” according to Winger.

Winger opened her Lillian’s franchise (the company was started in Buffalo, Minnesota) in 2008 and Cheryl Eterno officially joined her as co-owner in March of this year. “By 2008, I had worked in corporate communications and public relations for nearly 18 years. While I always enjoyed my work, it was time to try a new challenge,” said Winger of her decision to open Lillian’s.

According to Winger, working in retail has been an incredible experience owing to the people she has met along the way. “Since the beginning, my favorite part of the job has always been welcoming and chatting with our regular customers.” Stop by Lillian’s on any given weekend and you’re likely to become one of those regular happy customers, too.

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