

Jewelry hobby sparks boutique

By VIK KIRSCH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Corin Comisky likes to collect mementos from her travels.

On a recent trip to Long Island, she picked up a Murano Italian glass pendant. In Greenwich Village, New York City, she couldn't resist a silver pendant with a Central Park theme.

"Jewelry's always been a hobby of mine," says Comisky, who's turned that love into a business with Pretty Chic Boutique.

She opened the downtown jewelry store recently with her father, Steve Comisky, her business mentor.

In fact, she was inspired by her father, a Brantford-based tool-and-die maker who operated a machine shop for two decades, then ran an auto parts business before buying a firm that sells, rents and repairs forklift trucks. He's now semi-retired, and a partner in Pretty Chic Boutique at 34 Quebec St.

"He laughed and said: 'I never thought I'd be in the jewelry business,'" she recalled.

He's getting used to the idea.

"I've got the business background and I think she's shown some real skill in the jewelry business," said the elder Comisky, 62. "She's got a very keen eye looking for unique, classy jewelry."

For her shop, the younger Comisky prefers handmade jewelry by Canadian artists. She augments this collection with other items she sells, including purses, scarves, gourmet mustards and truffles.

Her business skills are more than inherited. Raised in Brantford, Comisky, 29, earned a University of Guelph bachelor of commerce honours degree with emphasis on marketing, then worked on in-store promotions for a Toronto ad agency, including promotions for some big corporate names, including Kellogg's, Kraft, Nabisco and Coke.

"They were exciting accounts to work on because of the size; also because of the budgets we had to work with," she recalled.

Ultimately, however, she wanted to return to a smaller community like Brantford, choosing Guelph, a city she'd come to appreciate while she was a student here.

"I wasn't loving Toronto. . . . (I'm) not a big city girl," she said.

Living in Guelph, she worked as an events co-ordinator, which kept her very busy.



The Entrepreneurs

"I don't mind working that hard, but I prefer working that hard for myself," she said, deciding to launch the jewelry business that opened Jan. 27.

"I love people coming in and trying things on," she said, noting their eyes light up when they see a piece they have to have. Working with her artist suppliers, she also offers custom work. A bride, for example, may like a set of earrings, but want them in another colour to match a gown.

She's hopeful she can focus increasingly on the creations of local artists. Store merchandise includes tote bags with record album artwork, or ones that display collector comic books.

"I've never seen anything like them," Comisky said.

Among distinctive other items are artsy necklaces made from zippers by a Montreal artist.

Gift items include gourmet mustards made by the sister of a friend in Mennickville, near Ottawa. She also sells hand-made truffles from a Toronto chocolatier.

What she likes about Quebec Street is the warm reception she's received from other merchants.

"Everyone's been really welcoming. It's made all the difference," said Comisky.

Her store is open Monday through Wednesday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and weekends 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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DAVE CARTER, GUELPH MERCURY

Corin Comisky has opened Pretty Chic Boutique on Quebec Street.