

Just the right mix for local

chicks

The Foxboro Reporter - 5/11/2006

With Mother's Day just over the horizon, there's no need to head for one of the area malls to find that unique gift for the special Mom in your life. Just venture over to glee gifts at 266 North Main St. in Mansfield and you're guaranteed to find something that will catch your eye.

Owned and operated by Ann Foley-Collins and Nadine Miller, the shop offers as lively range of gifts that includes elegant high-end costume jewelry and fragrance lamps with a choice of scented oils. glee gifts also stocks practical items like platters or stemware, as well as the perfect hostess gift, graduation, wedding or shower present — all priced to fit your budget.

This month, glee gifts is celebrating its first anniversary by designating Thursday, May 11 as "Guys' Night," an evening set aside to help men searching for just the right Mother's Day gift. In addition to one-stop shopping, customers can enjoy a cold drink and hors d'oeuvres while leaving wrapping to Nadine and Ann.

To help with the process, the savvy



shop owners have printed up a wish list of "gleeful gifts," suggesting ideas about what wives or significant others might like to receive on future special occasions.

glee gifts has a way of making shoppers feel right at home, thanks to the soft purple-and-green walls accented with darker purple stenciled designs that the owners refer to as "giggles." A curved glass vase serves as a sensuous accent piece reflecting the store's colors.

Foley-Collins gets credit for the stenciling. "She's the creative one and I'm the numbers person," Miller said.

While hoping to attract men to the shop in anticipation of the Mother's Day holiday this Sunday, the business partners candidly admit they are running a "chick's store" targeting twenty-

some things who want to relax and have fun. While the store's atmosphere may appeal to women, there are lots of gifts suited for all people — both men and women in your life.

The colorful upbeat atmosphere didn't happen by accident. Foley-Collins and Miller, who met through their children's day-care program, really did their homework. Miller has a strong background in the financial industry; Foley-Collins (who sports an artistic flair) was a performance consultant working with clients to identify problem areas and facilitate training programs in response to those problems.

Both at various times had considered starting a business, but it was October 2004 before the timing was right. At that time, the dynamic duo set their minds to figuring out what would be right for the first floor retail space in the newly developed Roosevelt Condo building. They spent hours talking to business owners up and down North Main Street in Mansfield picking their brains for ideas. In their naivete, they thought they would be able to open a gift shop by Christmas of that year.

Looking for expert advice, they hired Melinda Ailes, a business coach, to help with their business plan. Little did they realize what lay ahead.

"She really made us work," according to the "chicks."

Much of the business planning was done in the kitchen at Foley-Collins' house, and both concur the hardest part was coming up with a name.

Both partners chuckle recollecting that it took the help of neighbors, friends, and a couple of Bloody Mary's to come up with "glee gifts," which perfectly reflected the atmosphere they wished to create. With their homework done and their business plans in place, they gave their presentations to three banks.

Once they had their financing in place, they had to attend a New York gift show where they would decide what they wanted in their shop. Having done a lot of work on demographics, they knew they wanted to cater to the 25 year old and up crowd — women who liked to celebrate, entertain, who loved their friends, family and, most importantly, who loved life.

"We wanted to add to their happiness," Miller said.

The biggest concept they had to keep in mind was what glee is and not just what Nadine and Ann say it might be. "We wanted to be one step ahead of the customers. We want to set the trends," they both said.

The six-day New York show was an experience in itself. The partners