

Iconic Pittsford store to close its doors after 55 years



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Beads 'N Things, a Pittsford institution born 55 years ago between the Summer of Love and Woodstock, is closing for good.

Mother-daughter owners Sheila and Ann Grabowski say the shop at 50 State St. in Northfield Common will shutter by the end of August when the current lease expires, but they have not settled on a precise date.

A closing sale began Wednesday, June 14, with discounts of 30% to 50%.

The reasons for the decision are numerous, Sheila Grabowski said, but the rise of online shopping is a big one.

"The Internet has had a tremendous negative effect on retail stores," she said. "If everyone is being honest, everyone is feeling this, not just our little bead store. The smaller places are just kind of fading away."



The coronavirus pandemic, with its attendant lockdowns, supply-chain issues and other challenges, didn't help.

"Times have changed," she said, "and you've got to re-evaluate everything."

Plus, she said, the cost of doing business keeps going up and at 77 years old, "I'm not a spring chicken anymore."

In 2014, Beads 'N Things began selling jewelry-making kits at mybeadkit.com, and that will continue after the store closes.

Sheila Grabowski didn't found Beads 'N Things. It had two other owner/operators before she took the helm on Nov. 1, 1984, after working in real estate.

When it opened in 1968, the store sold beads – many made of wood and clay, in keeping with the era – but in the '70s and '80s put a heavier emphasis on the "Things" part of its name by stocking a range of crafting supplies (ribbons, grapevine wreaths, silk flowers, etc.).

An avid knitter and crocheter, she added a big line of yarns to the inventory.

However, around a decade into her ownership, based on the demand for beads and jewelry-making supplies, she returned Beads 'N Things to its original focus, offering an extensive selection of beads (freshwater pearl, turquoise and lapis among them), beading supplies, custom jewelry, restringing and repair services, jewelry-making classes and instructional books.

Soon after came a resurgence in handmade jewelry and a new business boom for Beads 'N Things, [Ann Grabowski told the Democrat and Chronicle in 2017](#), also citing an interest among millennials in "shopping small" and buying local.

Now 48, Ann was just 9 when her mother bought the business and worked there while growing up. In 2008, after a 12-year career with Xerox, the Cornell University alum made the leap, joining her mom as partner.

Sheila Grabowski said closing the store means she won't see her daughter every day, and she'll miss that. "We have such a good time and get along so well and feed off each other," she said.

Of course, she'll miss her customers, too. "What I truly loved was seeing the excitement on their faces after I taught them something, or they would teach me something," she said.

Lyn Nadeau, a customer of 15 years, took many courses at Beads 'N Things before launching her own business teaching beading in people's homes, and she still sources most of her materials from the store. "It's sad, very sad," she said of the closing.

Loretta Boerman, another longtime patron, described herself as “being in awe” of the shop when she first walked in the place. “This was my go-to store for beads. They have always had what I needed to make my jewelry,” she said, and called the Grabowskis “the greatest.”

Sheila Grabowski has heard the same sorts of things from other customers, via phone, text and social media, since the closing was announced.

“It’s been so heartwarming,” she said. “It makes you feel good that we did a good job.”

As for the future, “My daughter has a beautiful business background, so she can go pretty much anywhere,” she said.

Her own plan is to retire. “I warned my husband I’ll be home.”

The shop will be open seven days a week through July 1. Store hours will be 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Hours are expected to change in July and August, when discounts will increase, and will be announced on the shop’s social media channels and website, beadsthings-ny.com.

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