

Beads 'N Things daughter sticks with mom's bead business

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(Photo: Provided)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Ann Grabowski was 9 years-old when her mother bought the business, so she basically grew up in it.

Flash back to 1968 — the year after the Summer of Love and the year before Woodstock. Hippies were sure to wear some flowers in their hair.

Beads 'N Things opened in Pittsford that same year.

“It was a time of hippie beads and macramé,” said Ann Grabowski, who owns the shop with her mother, Sheila. They weren’t the founders — Sheila bought the Northfield Commons business in 1984 and Ann joined her in 2008.

Well past the hippie era, Beads 'N Things has been around for nearly half a century. The shop at one time expanded into all kinds of crafts but later scaled back to focus again, as it does now, on beads.

Sheila Grabowski made that decision in the mid-1990s. Soon after, Ann said, came a resurgence in handmade jewelry and a new business boom for Beads 'N Things.



Handmade bracelets have long been among the featured items at Beads 'N Things. (Photo: Provided)

“She saw that, and really rode the wave,” Ann Grabowski said. “The demand was there. People really wanted to make something for themselves or gifts for others.”

That attitude continues today with millennials who are interested in “shopping small,” buying local and handmade goods, she added. Beads 'N Things also does business with jewelry repair and restringing.

Sheila Grabowski was working in real estate before she bought Beads 'N Things. The place was on its second owner by then and that owner wanted to devote more time to her silversmith work, said Ann Grabowski. Sheila was an avid knitter and crocheter with an entrepreneurial spirit.

“She kept her eye on (business) listings and almost bought a Hallmark shop,” Ann said. “That planted the seeds for her. She really wanted to own a business.”

Beads 'N Things really stressed the “and things” part of the name then. The shop was about two-thirds crafts (think ribbons, grapevine wreaths, silk flowers and the sort) and about one-third beads.



Artisan beads and stones are abundant at the Beads 'N Things family business. (Photo: Provided)

Sheila introduced a big line of yarns until the big switch back in the mid-90s.

Everything except the beads and accessories was donated to local charities and schools. The tiny store sells “everything you need to assemble jewelry,” like leather and cord findings, as well as books, magazines and beads, lots of beads.

Some of the more popular varieties are freshwater pearl, turquoise, lapis and “healing stones” like chakra stones. More common versions like glass “seed beads” also are available, as well as charms.

Ann Grabowski was 9 years old when her mother bought the business, so she basically grew up in it. After attending Cornell University and working for 12 years at Xerox Corp., Ann made the career change, which she called a “huge leap.”

“I always loved our family business, and my timing was right,” she said. Ann developed the website www.mybeadkit.com to grow the online business, and orders now come in from all over the United States.

Events are being planned for the 50th anniversary next year. After nearly half a century, from the hippie era to today, the need for beads apparently is stronger than ever.

Alan Morrell is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

Family businesses

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Note: Article originally published on the Democrat & Chronicle's website:

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/lifestyle/2017/05/17/ann-grabowski-was-9-years-old-when-her-mother-bought-the-business-so-she-basically-grew-up-in-it/101791590/>