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Why Not Gift Store settles into St. Peter storefront

By NANCY MADSEN nmadsen@stpeterherald.com Feb 5, 2019 Updated 3 hrs ago



Sandi Braun-Ziemer, left, and mother Shirley Braun own Why Not Gift Store, which opened fronting Minnesota Avenue in Four Seasons Mall in December. They host a dozen craft vendors with a wide range of offerings. (Nancy Madsen/St. Peter Herald)

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The owners of Why Not Gift Store had intended to open for just a month.

But, based on customer and vendor response, they were open for a year in Le Sueur's Valley Green Square Mall. Then they and contributing vendors agreed that they wanted a storefront. That ended up pushing the store to St. Peter.

"Everyone decided to move and try it," co-owner Sandi Braun-Ziemer said.

Shirley Braun, Sandi's mother and co-owner, added, "Their input is very important to us. We have a monthly meeting with them."

When they couldn't find what they were looking for in Le Sueur, they turned their sights to St. Peter, where Sandi graduated from high school. Shirley lives in Kasota, a little closer.

They got their Minnesota Avenue-facing storefront on Dec. 4 in Four Seasons Mall, 208 S. Minnesota Ave. They closed up after a craft show at Valley Green Square Mall the night before, then all the vendors moved their goods over to St. Peter and the store was ready to open the next day.

There are 13 vendors at the store now. They rent table spots to vendors on a monthly basis.

Sandi and Shirley don't take wages for keeping the doors open and working the store hours; they sell their own handmade goods. The fees pay the rent and keep the lights on.

The rent agreement and structure encourages frequent rotation of the vendors' stock.

"Crafters leave their items here when they're not at shows," Sandie said.

They've got baby clothes, plus-sized clothes, bath soaps and bombs, knitted goods, intricate carved wood decor and unique jewelry. While most vendors are local, Sandi orders gourmet popcorn from Wisconsin and leather bags from California.

"These are all homemade gifts, made from the heart," Shirley said. "They're not pre-made from a factory."

Sandi and Shirley create a seasonal display area and fill a display window if the vendors don't.

Besides the retail space, Why Not has a classroom they call the "creative center." There are weekly classes on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings, which are drop-in and feature a "thrifty craft" on the first week of the month. Some classes are free; others

require a registration fee. In February, the store will host sell and swap times for crafting supplies and clothing, a new experiment. Sandi said the best way to stay informed on the offerings is through the Why Not page on Facebook.

Sandi and Shirley have dipped their toes into online retail, offering pick-up or shipping for goods ordered online Sundays through Wednesdays.

“We’re still figuring out what is wanted in the dynamics,” Sandi said. “People here don’t want to come out shopping by the evening.”

They’re open to other events: private painting parties and birthday parties among them.

The St. Peter store will have a grand opening on Feb. 16 with food, prize drawings, demonstrations and drinks from Next Chapter Winery.

“It’s been fun moving to town,” Sandi said.

Reach Associate Editor Nancy Madsen at 507-931-8568 or follow her on Twitter.com @SPHnancy.

Why Not Gift Store

Why Not Gift Store

Address: 208 S. Minnesota Ave., St. Peter

Phone: (507) 327-2660

Hours: Noon to 6 p.m. Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, with online shopping available when closed.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pg/whynotgiftstore

Website: whynotgiftstore.weebly.com

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