

BUSINESS PROFILE

Enjewel flourishes in a downtown “growing and growing”

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Many businesses in downtown Fort Myers’ River District say they’ve struggled to survive amid a street beautification project that has blocked entranceways; and, with the economic downturn, added insult to injury.

But Lynne Routhier is happy keeping her jewelry and accessory boutique, Enjewel, there. She’s re-opening the shop June 24 in its third location since 2005, all three near the same corner in downtown, at First Street and the Patio De Leon. But this time she has the prime spot, right on the corner.

“Downtown continues to evolve,” she said. “I really have faith in downtown, even the way it is now. It’s a great place to have a business, and it can only get better.”

“Business truly has not been slow for us. It’s been growing and growing constantly. I think the reason, too, that it continues to grow is, we continue to change.”

To adjust to some consumer’s tight budgets, Routhier said she’s cut prices, but added a wider selection. For ideas on new pieces for her store, she travels three times a year – to Atlanta, New York and Boston – to jewelry trade shows. (Atlanta has the best one, she said). That helps keeps her up to date on seasonal fashions, so her items, like jewelry and purses, are in sync with the newest lines of clothing.

“It really starts out with the clothing lines,” she said. “They decide what’s going to be in that season.”

She gets new pieces in weekly. Enjewel

carries a variety of jewelry, purses and other accessories (\$5 and up), from artists in India, Poland and across the United States. Also, key chains, scarves, belts, incense, pocket-books and “soap rocks,” which is soap designed to look like a large piece of opal or turquoise.

“I found some great artists that I worked with, around the world, and we’ve incorporated some of their jewelry here,” she said. “They’re so unusual. They’re rare one-of-a-kind pieces you can’t get anywhere else.”

Having something new or different on the shelf was part of the reason she’s stayed successful, Routhier said. The other part was keeping prices low. “It’s a combination of providing rare and unique items at a reasonable price. That’s my main form of success. Because we’re not competing with Wal-Mart and big chains...I think our prices are exceptional for what you’re getting.”

Her inventory is chosen with professional women in mind specifically, who want to look good without getting sticker shock. And the shop is often a social gathering place during workday lunch breaks. But there are also pieces for teenagers or the



Lynne Routhier at Enjewel.

COURTESY PHOTO

anti-business woman with eclectic tastes. For example, a necklace with a skull and crossbones. That’s among the costume jewelry, which is certainly bejeweled, but less expensive since it’s not made of precious metals.

“With the economy obviously in a downturn, I want to make my pieces accessible to anyone watching their income,” she said. “I’m hoping that no matter who you are, you could find something in this store.”

Right now, big, bold, “crayola” colors are in, Routhier said, as well as the color yellow. Some of her purses (\$15 and up) come in those shades. Some are made of leather, or studded with beads; one of the most popular is made with natural horn and mother of pearl. All items sold at the store come nicely packaged in an Enjewel box and gift bag.

To prepare for the grand opening of Enjewel’s new location, the inside has been repainted, and new fans and track lighting were installed.

“We’re giving it a face lift, pretty much,” said Lynne’s daughter, Vanessa, who was helping add some finishing touches last Saturday.

Everything is arranged in a space about the same size as the one before, which is small. Although this one has higher ceilings, tiger print carpet, a few more windows and a better location. The selling point to Routhier though, was the four cherub statues that guard the front entrance of the old, historic building.

“It symbolizes a lot to us,” she said. “Cherubs are known for being guardian angels.”

At least in downtown Fort Myers they are, and maybe Boston too, where Routhier is from originally. She left there eight years ago and moved to Cape Coral. She and her husband bought and sold real estate the first few years they were there, during the market boom, until she moved on to the jewelry store in 2005. Her plans had been forming since a few years before that, when Routhier visited her brother in New Hampshire.

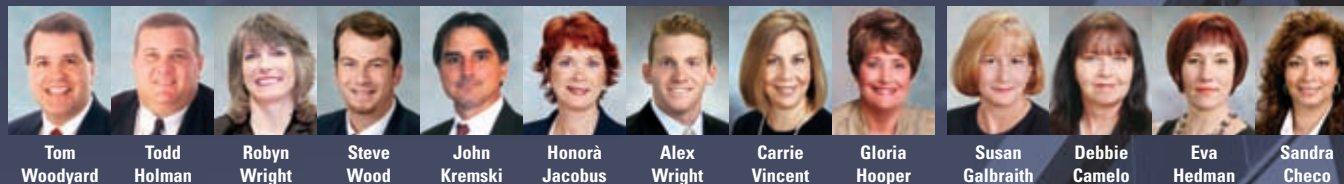
“He was making some jewelry and I just sat in and started making jewelry and that’s truly how it began,” she said.

In the next few years, Routhier plans to start her own clothing line. But for now she’s looking forward to seeing some familiar faces.

“We’re very anxious to see our old friends and customers,” she said. “We can’t wait to see them.” ■

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