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Focus

ON GEORGETOWN

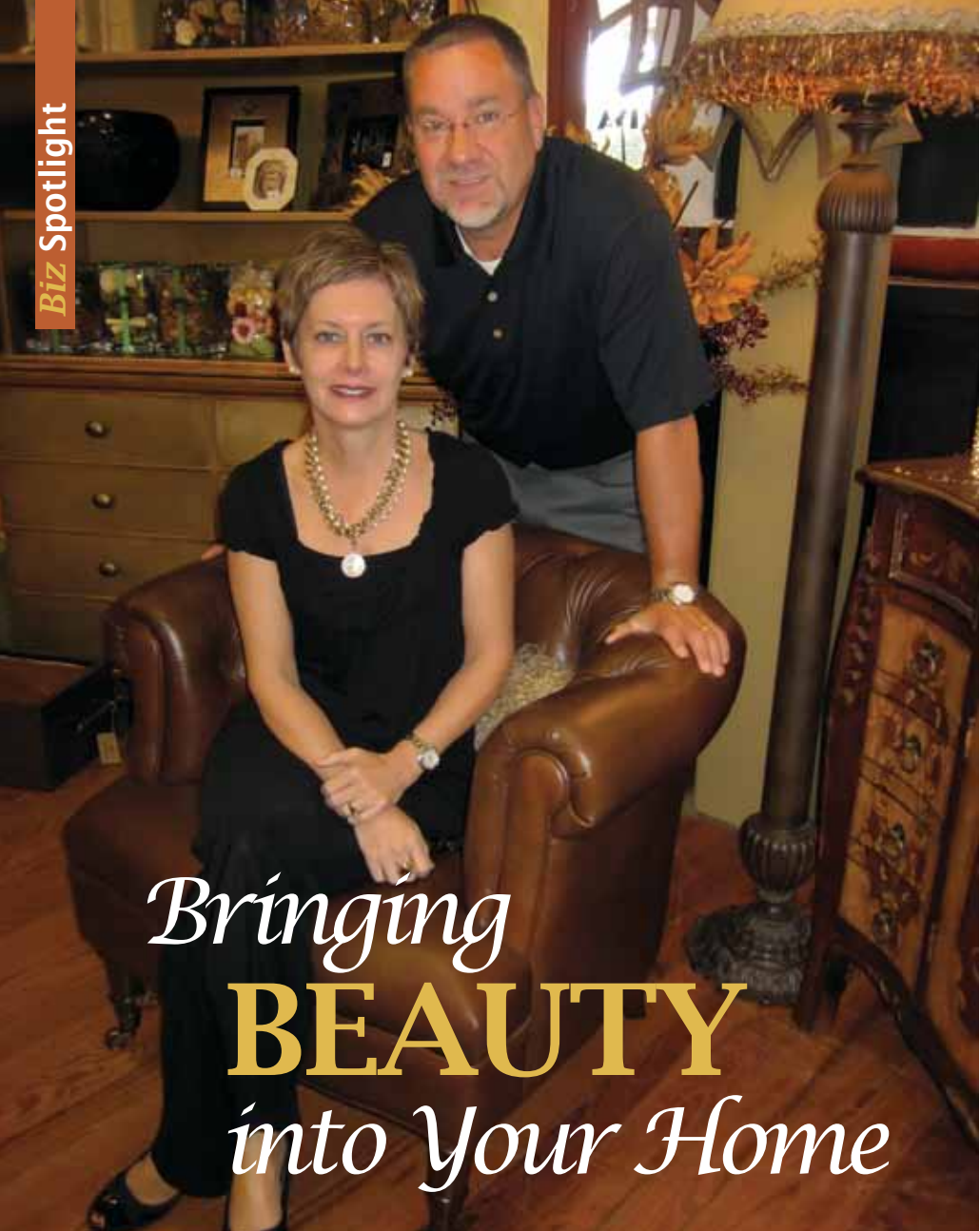
Your Community Magazine

Diva

Ultimate Design Studio
*Bringing Beauty
into Your Home*



Premiere Issue



Bringing BEAUTY into Your Home

How a local furniture store showcases what can happen when a strong and determined woman dreams.

By Rachel Ingram

When you're on vacation, you start to forget about reality. Relaxed and happy, you turn your thoughts to the beautiful place you're visiting, and sometimes your mind wanders into its reservoir of dreams. Eight years ago, Jeannine Weisbrod went on a trip to San Miguel, Mexico, where she revisited her dream of opening a store. This time, the dream followed her back home to reality.

"On every trip, I'd always say to my husband, 'I'd like to open my own business,'" Jeannine said. This time, he said, "That's it. I've got a good, stable job. When we get back, you're going to open your own little shop."



Three other couples were on vacation with them, and all the women urged Jeannine to come up with the store's name. While they were in a taxi one evening, Jeannine turned her head and saw "Diva" on a storefront. That was the answer she gave them. Jeannine asked the locals what the word "diva" meant to them; after all, it was significant enough to be the name of a store.

"They said it meant strong, determined woman," Jeannine recalled. "And I thought: I can do this."

When Jeannine and her husband, Randy, returned to Georgetown from their vacation, they opened Diva, a small home accessories store off the town square. The store was 2,100 square

feet—almost a quarter of the size of their current space.

Eight years later, the store is in an 8,300-square-foot space in the

“ Its name is Diva: The Ultimate Design Studio, providing services that now stretch far beyond home accessories. ”

old Gold's building at 115 W. 7th Street. Its name is Diva: The Ultimate Design Studio, providing

services that now stretch far beyond home accessories. Today, Diva offers interior design, consultation, space planning, remodeling, interior and exterior painting, furniture, accessories, custom bedding, flooring, rugs, window coverings, drapery, and Hunter Douglas window treatments. They also work with builders to help customers create their new homes. And if decorating homes from floor to ceiling wasn't enough, Jeannine and Randy have recently been looking into outdoor furniture.

Part of Jeannine's dream of starting her own business was to be accessible to her daughter, Lacey, who has a disability.

"She was sick at the time, and I thought, if I had my own

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DIVA
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business, I could just flip over the sign to say 'Closed' and go to her," Jeannine said.

Oddly enough, as soon as Diva opened, Lacey's health improved significantly. With that blessing, Diva grew.

Shortly thereafter, Randy suffered a stroke, which turned into a blessing as well, as Jeannine needed him during Diva's rapid growth period. After working at FedEx for 24 years, Randy left his position as senior plant manager to help Jeannine with the business.

Diva was, and still is, a family-owned business. When the store first opened, the only

employees were Jeannine, Randy, and Jeannine's mother, Blanche. Jeannine and Randy's son, Bobby, came aboard after he finished school, and he is now in charge of bookkeeping and the flooring division.

Today, four designers make up their extended family: Carol Dishman, Darlene Rabideau, Krys Shirosky, and Cassandra Watson. Blanche is also among Diva's group of talented designers. Simply put, they know and can do everything.

As far as the store merchandise is concerned, as with everything else, it started back in San Miguel.

"We started with buying in San Miguel, but we went in a



different direction for our clients and the pieces they wanted," Randy said. "Jeannine spends a lot of time buying. She travels to at least six markets a year. A lot of people don't like going to markets, or they go to just one market or to the same store, which they usually purchase from. Jeannine visits different showrooms at each market. Getting off the beaten path is what makes Diva unique."

While Jeannine's competitors buy 20 or 30 of the same item, she will, at most, buy only two or three. Diva also works with over 1,500 vendors—a nightmare for bookkeeping, but a blessing for clients in search of a unique look. If Diva decorates your home, the chances that you'll have the same furniture as your neighbor are pretty slim.

In October, Diva began preparing for what Jeannine calls its "grande finale" of the year—holiday decorating. The store closed for three days while undergoing a complete holiday transformation, which was followed by a huge Christmas

party. The ladies then began holiday transformations for their clients, which will continue until the holidays end.

Diva's fun and fabulous Christmas party isn't the only time the designers see their clients as friends, however. Forming and deepening friendships is part of their work philosophy.

"I cannot tell you the number of people that I have met through my business that I now call my friends," Jeannine said. "They are people I care about, people that I go out to eat with, and people that will come in and give me advice."

Which is why Diva epitomizes what good customer service and building a community-based business are all about. Stop by and make a new friend. ■

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Photos in this section courtesy of Rachel Ingram