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Business Profile

Family First at the Bear Friend Factory



Peter McDermid, owner of The Bear Friend Factory, is in the business of making people smile.

“You’ve never seen anybody upset about a Teddy Bear,” says Peter who with wife Stephanie started The Bear Friend Factory in their basement in 2013. The business has since grown and moved into a storefront in downtown Sparta. The whimsical historic village is proving to be a great fit for this business that revolves around bringing people together and providing an experience that the whole family will enjoy.

The Bear Friend Factory is a place where customers can help to create their own stuffed animals on-site. This unique interactive experience allows

children to feel involved in the creation of a special new friend.

“Stuffed animals are a special part of childhood,” says Peter. “Everyone has had one and you always remember your favourite.”

The store offers animals in two sizes: the smaller Buddies and the standard size Friends. There are 25 different Buddies to choose from and over 45 different Friends - the largest collection of create-your-own animals in the area.



In addition to picking out an animal, customers are able to choose how much stuffing to include, pick out an outfit and select a name for a personalized birth certificate. Each animal also comes with a colouring page that can be completed and

entered into a colouring contest. The Bear Friend Factory also carries an extensive collection of animal outfits so your newly created friend will never be at a loss for what to wear.

The Bear Friend Factory offers on-location parties for groups of 10 or participants. Creating your own stuffed animal is sure to be a hit at birthday parties or corporate team building events.

ER Buddies is a special initiative that the Bear Friend Factory has been involved in since the beginning. Peter fundraises independently in order to provide stuffed animals for ill or injured children coming into the emergency department at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital. These stuffed animals help to calm children down and make a traumatic experience a little bit better. After the 2016 donation, The Bear Friend Factory will have provided approximately 550 animals to this program.



After settling in to his location in Sparta, Peter found that he had more than enough room for what he wanted to do with The Bear Friend Factory and decided that he would utilize the existing space to give talented local crafts people the opportunity to showcase their products. The Whistle Stop Peddlers are a group of seventeen local vendors who offer a unique selection of high quality products that are sure to please everyone on your list. Products available include



knit and crochet items, clothing, handcrafted wood item, stained glass, soap, jewellery, seasonal decorations, gemstones, handmade granola, gift baskets and more.

“We wanted to keep our store fresh,” says Peter. “We wanted to create a one-stop shop for all of your gift needs, a place that the whole family could come and find something to keep them entertained.”

The Bear Friend Factory is open from 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday – Saturday and Noon – 4:00 p.m. on Sundays. For more information visit <http://www.bearfriendfactory.com/> or find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BearFriendFactory/>.

Business Profile

The Chique Shack Boutique – A Stylist at Your Finger Tips



Style is in Tiffany Richter's blood. Childhood summers spent working at her grandmother's clothing store in Southampton cemented her love of fashion and led her to pursue a diploma in Fashion Merchandising from Fanshawe College. After graduation Tiffany went to work for a major Canadian Fashion retailer and her natural aptitude helped her to quickly rise through the ranks. She spent eight years with the organization and was responsible for opening up new store locations across the country.

Tiffany knew that she eventually wanted to be her own boss and to put her talents for fashion and styling into her own platform. She began to scout locations to open her own boutique. As part of her previous role in the fashion industry she was responsible for understanding the economy and forecasting how communities will grow over time. She wanted to find a location that would make running a small, one-of-a-kind clothing boutique viable.

Tiffany's grandmother had since retired and

moved to Port Stanley where she had opened up another clothing store called "Tiffany's" in honour of her beloved granddaughter. Tiffany was familiar with the small portside village from visiting her grandmother and was able to see the potential for growth in the community. March 2017 will mark the eighth year that Tiffany's own boutique The Chique Shack has been operating in downtown Port Stanley providing loyal customers with high quality clothing and exceptional service.

The store began by selling quality resale items hand selected by Tiffany herself. Now a mix of new and resale items, she maintains her





commitment to offering garments and accessories that she has selected based on their uniqueness and high quality construction. As a busy wife, mother and business owner Tiffany strongly believes that clothing should not only look great but also be functional. She wears what she sells and embraces the philosophy that you can look great and be comfortable at the same time.

Tiffany strives to make a visit to The Chique Shack Boutique a unique and pleasant experience for her customers. From the store's layout and presentation of merchandise to personalized customer service, she wants to make her location a departure from the standard shopping experience. Most women go into a mall and find that everything is too small and too tight. Standard clothing store marketing is designed to sell to a smaller, younger demographic which according to Tiffany doesn't reflect the reality of the population.

"Price point and wearability are key considerations when selecting merchandise for my store," says Tiffany. "In a world of 'high end', high priced boutiques I offer a successful range

of affordable fashion for all ages and sizes."

A visit to The Chique Shack is like having a stylist at your finger tips – completely free of charge! Tiffany uses her expertise to interact one-on-one with her customers helping them to select the items that best suit them.

"Because I am a confident dresser myself, based on understanding my own body type and how to best flatter my shape, I see that instantly for my customers when I'm styling them," says Tiffany. "That's what makes the whole Chique Shack experience different. I have an eye to flatter the body and a sense of style that is for a modern woman who wants the ease and comfort of looking fabulous everyday!"

Like and Follow The Chique Shack Boutique on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more information and some stylish fashion inspiration.



Business Profile

The Wayside Dining Lounge – Serving Generations of Families in Elgin County



In 2016, The Wayside Dining Lounge in Talbotville celebrated a significant milestone – 80 continuous years in business. This is an impressive achievement for any business, especially a small, independently-owned business in a rural community. For year the Wayside Dining Lounge has been serving generations of residents and visitors to Elgin County who return time after time to experience its friendly atmosphere and mouth-watering culinary selections.

The property that the restaurant is located on has a long history dating back to 1913 when it was purchased by David Fife who operated a gas-powered grist mill on the site. A new structure was built on the site in 1936 which included a restaurant and a gas station. The restaurant had a series of owners and was used as a Greyhound bus terminal and pick-up location for many years.

The current owners Nick and Trudy Kanellis purchased the restaurant from the Escaf brothers in 1975. In 1978 the pair expanded the building, increasing its size by 50%. This was

the first of many improvements that they would make to the location over the next four decades. In 1987 further renovations took place including the installation of windows on the front of the building. In 1993 a lounge and a small private dining room were added. A devastating fire destroyed 80% of the building in 2001 but Nick and Trudy were determined to quickly reopen to the public and within seven months a new interior and exterior were finished. Further upgrades were done in 2006 and again in 2007.

Located at the corner of Highway 3 and 4, on a busy corridor between London and St. Thomas, the Wayside is a great place for hungry travellers to stop for a bite to eat. Over the past 40 years, Nick and Trudy have been able to build a robust and loyal customer base through



friendly service and great food. A spacious bar and dining area cater to the after work crowd as well as families dining out for the evening. The restaurant specializes in an excellent variety of North American cuisines including pasta, steak, chicken, seafood, and a popular weekend buffet that features all you can eat Yellow Lake Perch. The carefully selected wine list features picks from Italy, France and the Niagara Region.

In 1977 Nick and Trudy began to offer catering services after they purchased Galaway Foods in St. Thomas. They offer their services for all occasions including small meetings, large corporate parties, BBQs, weddings, anniversaries and more. The pair can accommodate groups of five to five-thousand.

Nick and Trudy attribute part of the Wayside's success to their own involvement in the community. When they aren't busy running the restaurant they both enjoy giving back through the Rotary Club, the United Way, the Alzheimer's Society, Ducks Unlimited, the CASO Station, the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital Foundation other local charities and fundraisers.

"We are successful because we care about our community and our loyal customers," says Trudy. "Without our customers we wouldn't be here today."

For more information about the Wayside Dining Lounge or to preview the menu, visit <http://www.waysidedining.com/index.php>.

Award

Elgincentsives Recognized By the Ontario Professional Planners Institute



On November 10, 2016 the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) announced the 2016 winners of the Excellence in Planning Awards at a press conference at Queen's Park in Toronto. [The Elgincentsives Community Improvement Plan](#) received an award in the Municipal Statutory Planning Studies, Reports and Documents category.

Bruce Curtis of OPPI presented Warden Bernie

Wiehle, members of County Council, and staff with the award at the County Council meeting on November 22, 2016.

These awards recognize innovation, creativity, professionalism, problem-solving and progressive advancements in planning.

The Elgincentsives Community Improvement Plan is the first of its kind in the Province of Ontario. Elgin County was able to develop a creative framework for community improvement planning that met with all requirements of the Ontario Planning Act. By developing a visioning document at the County level and preparing 7 individual CIPs to be adopted by partner municipalities, Elgin was able to provide CIP funding to local businesses. To-date this popular program has provided 50 projects with \$350,000 in funding amounting to over \$1M in investment in the Elgin County economy.