

Loss of coffee shop is Re Deux's gain

Consignment shop opens in Wyndhurst Station

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Posted 6/17/09

Jan Braun said she and Linda Eisenbrandt had an early taste of success, a week before their women's clothing consignment shop opened officially on June 13 in the Wyndhurst Station shopping center.

"We were setting up last Saturday (June 6) and 10 people came in -- and nine of them bought something," Braun said.

Braun, a comptroller for the Atlantic Trading Co. in Baltimore, and Eisenbrandt, a local sales representative for the Worth Collection, a line of women's fashions, are now also co-owners of Re Deux.

The shop sells high-end, second-hand clothing and accessories, ranging from Burberry kilts to green-black plaid Dolce and Gabbana pants favored by Madonna, Braun said.

The pants probably would retail for \$600 new, Braun said. But she and Eisenbrandt are selling them for \$60.

Re Deux is a for-profit business with a charitable heart. It's geared to help people buy affordable but upscale clothing in the recession, while helping raising money for charity and supplementing the incomes of its owners.

Consignors can split the profits 50-50 with Re Deux or have their share donated to the charity of their choice.

And prices are low because "we want people to feel like they got something good in the economy," Braun said on opening day (Eisenbrandt was in New York on business for the Worth Collection).

Re Deux is next door to Little Lamb, a children's consignment shop in the center. Little Lamb owner Julia Clarizio said she doesn't consider the two stores competitive because the clientele is so different.

Wyndhurst Station owner Michael Weinfeld, of Kittredge Properties, said he thinks the two shops will complement each other.

But Clarizio warned that Re Deux might be in for a slow few months initially because summer is an off season for consignment shops, as many people go on vacation. Little Lamb actually reduces its hours and closes for a week, Clarizio said.

"I think it might be the wrong time of year to open a store like this," she said.

According to a press release, Braun and Eisenbrandt, both well-known fundraisers for charitable causes, started the store to "offer women in Baltimore a way to freshen their wardrobe without breaking the bank or a great way to give to charity."

"So many people are simplifying their lives and wardrobes and cutting expenses that we knew that Re Deux would resonate with many of our friends," Braun said.

After six months of planning, they opened in Wyndhurst Station. They looked for space in a shopping center Kittredge Properties owns in Ruxton and Weinfeld steered them to Wyndhurst Station, where community opposition has set back his plan to open a coffee shop and cafe.

The two women have an inventory of 800 items, a fancy-sounding shop name and a New York-based publicist, who defined Re Deux as French for "remix."

But Eisenbrandt and Braun haven't put nearly as much money into their new venture as the hype might suggest. The publicist, Mary Lou DiNardo is a friend of theirs. Other than hanging pictures and putting up clothes racks, the co-owners have done little to the sparse retail space where the Executive Sweets candy

and gift shop used to be.

Neither of them has quit their day jobs.

It's hard to imagine them getting rich by selling clothes -- many of which still have their original price tags because they were never worn -- for a fraction of what they first cost. They've already sold a Pucci jacket for \$50 and a Marc Jacobs handbag for \$45. They were originally selling the bag for \$30, but the buyer insisted the price was too low.

"No, you can't sell it for that," she said.

"So we sold it for \$45," Braun said. "Pricing things has been the hardest part."

And they won't even accept consigned clothing unless it's in perfect shape, with no rips or stains.

Re Deux isn't make or break for Braun and Eisenbrandt, but in the recession, "We have both definitely cut back and felt the pinch," Braun said. "We would like to make money. We're treating it as a business."

But she said, "We're not here to make a killing."

Re Deux, 5002 Lawndale Road off Wyndhurst Avenue. is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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