

Ask SCORE for Business Advice

“Ask SCORE” Column

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Father and Daughter Businesses Compliment Each Other by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Lee Mothes grew up in Sunset Beach, California, one block from the Ocean. He spent his childhood watching and photographing the mysteries of the water, and was inspired to paint. As he matured, he showed that he had an undeniable talent for creating memorable art. So, in 1990 he turned his passion into a business and started “Oceans and Dreams.”

As a little girl, Alison Mothes played in the custom playhouse that her dad, Lee, made for his three daughters. She and her sisters pretended that they were in their own little shop and served tea to one another from tiny cups and teapots.

In February 2009, Alison followed in her father’s entrepreneurial footsteps and purchased Kaukauna Coffee & Tea on Wisconsin Avenue in Kaukauna.

What started as childhood musings for both, turned into businesses. Now, Alison and her dad are operating in the same building. It is a unique twist to the single entity family business. The father and daughter have separate businesses, but they are operations that compliment and support each other.

Lee says that it was a natural fit. Before moving to the Kaukauna Coffee & Tea building in October 2009, he sold his art at shows throughout the region. If you’ve been to Art Street in Green Bay, you’ve likely seen his work. By adding a gallery location, he is able to showcase his art on an on-going basis.

This is where the art connects with the coffee shop. Alison said, “The shops compliment each other with a reason to go to each to see the unique variations. The arts are incorporated into my business, both visually and musically, with local artists’ work (including Dad’s) and local bands.”

About 90% of the art displayed in the coffee shop is provided by Fox Valley artists. When Alison wrote her business plan, one of her goals was to have a business that supported other local businesses in terms of product selection, merchandise, and décor. Having the Ocean and Dreams Gallery upstairs continues the artistic theme.

“Our customers both patronize each others’ businesses,” Lee noted. And, there are other rewards. “I love to see the improvements Alison constantly makes in the coffee shop, and the chance to chat briefly or just say hello when I pass through.”

For Allison and Lee, there is mutual admiration. Lee respects Allison’s get-it-done-now ability, and Allison credits her dad’s positive attitude.

“He taught me to not make excuses and to take chances if it’s something I believe in. He’s always optimistic and asking me what’s going to happen next,” Allison said.

Since Allison is the building owner, Lee finds it amusing to have his daughter as Landlord. However, from rent negotiations to opening, everything has gone smoothly and they look forward to growing the businesses and adding complimentary activities.

As Alison approaches her first Father’s Day with dad as a tenant, she notes that she is especially thankful and grateful for his guidance. From Dad’s side, Lee says, “I’m proud of you, Ali, and I’m glad I’m your dad.”

If you’d like to learn more, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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