

TAKING CENTER STAGE

Osweiler's Women's Fashions

SUPPORTING LOCAL SINCE 1983

“We want to create customers, not just sales,” said Kathy Birkestrand, co-owner of Osweiler’s Fashions in Webster City. Creating customers and loyal ones is exactly what Ron and Kathy Birkestrand have done since 1983.

Paul Osweiler started Osweiler’s Fashions in 1956 and strategically located his store across the street from Eichman’s which had a strong customer base. Paul believed it was important to have more than one store locally for shoppers to purchase their clothing.

In 1983, Ron and Kathy purchased Osweiler’s Fashions from Paul as a result of a letter Ron sent to him asking Paul if he knew of any clothing stores for sale and the rest is history. Through the transition, Paul and Ron had a strong mentor/mentee relationship. “We had a great relationship,” said Ron.

Ron’s background is in management. For 15 years, he was part of the training program with Sears and earned his General Business Degree from Drake. “Ron isn’t cut out to be a company man,” said Kathy. “He’s meant to run his own business.”

Kathy is no stranger to retail landscape either. She attended Stephens College in Columbia Missouri for Fashion Design and then went on to Drake to major in Journalism and Advertising.

Osweiler’s Fashions is a full-service women’s clothing store that has built up a reputation as a place to go for women’s apparel, especially for coats and dresses. “Our customers come from Ames, Boone, and Fort Dodge among other locations,” said Kathy. In the past few years, they have seen about 65-70% of their customers coming from out of town.

Osweiler’s stocks fashionable merchandise for those aged 16 to 96 years old. They have prided themselves on being focused on providing quality merchandise that is meant to last.

Business is never boring as the retail landscape has changed quite a bit over the years. With that said, Ron and Kathy don’t feel like they have been too challenged by online competitors. However, they do feel they’ve lost a generation to shopping malls. “It’s a totally different downtown than it was in 1983,” said Kathy.

One of the reasons they chose to live and do business in Webster City was because this is Kathy’s hometown. They feel a deep sense of pride in the community and believe that supporting local is very important. Every time a store closes, it hurts. “I think we owe it to our community, if they support us, we should support them,” said Ron.

