

Upper Bucks County Holiday Shopping Event Offers An Inspiring Touch

by Chrissy Kruger-Gruendyke

Though the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations are upon us, there is one Philadelphia-area shopping opportunity that offers a reprieve from the chaos typically associated with this time of year.

Cherished small-town shopping experience, The Victorian Boutique is one of Telford's hidden treasures and has been delighting shoppers for 23 years.

It is a unique craft and home decor shopping event held in the nearly 200-year-old Victorian home of John and Jackie Fenstermacher. The home is transformed into a lovely boutique where each of the 13 period-rooms is elegantly decorated with quality home decor and specialty gifts for sale.

The magical ambience makes for a memorable and cherished experience.

"I think that's why people come back every year, because we take the time to set up everything so meticulously," Jackie said. "It's a visual experience that inspires our customers."

It was started 23 years ago in just four rooms of the home to allow Jackie -- a woman of the baby boomer generation who never went to college or built a business plan -- to earn a living while remaining home with her three children.

It grew into a thriving business and today the 13-room, consignment-format Show allows the Fenstermachers to enjoy family time with their three grown daughters, three sons-in-law and six grand children.

The home itself, built in 1863 and always Fenstermacher-owned, is a spectacular representation of the Queen Anne Victorian architecture style. It stands prominently on Telford's Main Street.

The featured artisan crafts are arranged by theme in each of the rooms by Jackie and the others involved in this traditional family business.

You'll find an abundance of snowmen in the mahogany-trimmed formal dining room. The color red serves as the theme in light-filled breakfast room and cardinals are a primary focus. Magnificent jewelry fills the glamorous living room, and children's items can be appropriately found in one of Jackie's grown daughter's old bedrooms.

A particularly inspired room is the Victorian parlor where white lights, angels and other decorations show off the show's "Peace on Earth" theme.

Every show features speciality candies, local artisan crafts, jewelry and one-of-a-kind finds. There are seven-themed holiday trees including a snowman tree, gingerbread tree and a special peace-themed tree. Each tree drips with quality holiday ornaments and details.

Most of those working to put the show together are immediate family members (including Jackie's daughters) or have been a part of the show for years -- making them seem like family. Artisans are also often present during the show.

The Fenstermachers hope guests will think of the Victorian Boutique on Black Friday and throughout the remaining weekend of the Show as a comforting reprieve from commercial shopping experiences.

"Our ambience is warm and inviting since we operate out of our own home," Jackie said. "We are able to welcome people here as if they were popping over for an intimate visit."

Each year generations, of mostly women, flock to the Victorian Boutique to enjoy a day of shopping and spending time together. "Year after year, we see the grandmothers, mothers and daughters shopping together. It brings joy to my heart to see that since that sense of family is what started it all," Fenstermacher said.

In addition to the 4-week Fall Show, there is a 2-week Spring Show, March 13 - 28, 2010 featuring spring novelties.

There is a \$1 entry fee for the first visit. After the first visit, all additional visits to that season's show are welcomed without the entry fee.

The Victorian Boutique Fall Show Final Weekend is Nov. 25 - 29 (closed on Thanksgiving day) and includes Black Friday, Nov. 27. Hours are: Wednesday, Nov. 25, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Black Friday, Nov. 27, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 28, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 29, 12 - 5 p.m. It is located at 53 N. Main Street, Telford, PA 18969.

Additional information is available at www.victorianboutiquetelford.com.