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Business

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Business

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Edge Wise fulfills ice skaters' needs

The business: Edge Wise Sport Supply, 5106 N.W. Waukomis Drive, Kansas City; 816-587-2758;



"Everyone has weak ankles ... you simply need strong skates," shop owner Stephanie Brizendine said.

www.edgewisesportsupply.com

About the business: Edge Wise is a full-service figure skating pro shop with a complete line of equipment. The store also carries items for baton twirlers, dancers and gymnasts; dresses and accessories; custom artwork; jewelry; and rhinestones for dresses and street wear. Three part-time employees are skaters and/or coaches.

Owner: Stephanie Brizendine.

Owner's role: "I do it all, but I spend most of my time fitting skates. Figure skating is an equipment-driven sport and a poor fitting skate is the reason most people stop. Everyone has weak ankles, and it is a myth that you need strong ankles to skate — you simply need strong skates. Matching the right skate to the skater's need is my most important job."

What is your background?

"I began skating in Jefferson City around 5 years old. I graduated from University of Central Missouri with a B.S. in organization communication/minor in journalism and spent several years working for a local marketing and public relations firm. I coached figure skating most of my adult life while growing a family."

Why did you feel there was a need for a full-service figure skating pro shop in the Kansas City area?

"As a coach, I would see skaters show up with skates from a rummage sale or with some cheap department store novelty skate. They had such hopes of stepping on the ice and gliding, but instead would just be a clumsy mess. We would often take them out of their cheap, poor fitting skates and put them in rentals so that they could achieve some level of success on the ice."

Had this been tried before in the area and if so, how is your business different?

"Most rinks in town have successful pro shops but are limited in the inventory they can carry. Also, most pro shops tend to lean more toward hockey equipment. My business is different in that it is more of a boutique atmosphere."

How long did it take you to start your business?

"I began fitting skates at the rink in October of 2000. As the demand grew, I made more products available. In February of 2007, I officially opened at my present location."

What kind of research did you do on the industry before opening your business?

"I started with the business plan. I visited pro shops that were successful in Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Louis. I also spent a lot of time talking to my sales reps that visit pro shops regularly. None of the shops I visited had the boutique-style shop except for the store in St. Louis. We now work very closely together and will often collaborate on marketing efforts and sales strategies."

What are some of the challenges of opening a sports shop?

"There are only a handful of skate manufacturers out there, and the market is very competitive. I have to stay very educated on what is just 'marketing' and what product will truly enhance a skater's experience. It is also a challenge overcoming perceptions about the sport. Parents often want to buy skates really big because of their fear of the expense of the sport."

Has the business grown since you opened, and what are your plans for expansion?

"Present expansion includes carrying a new fun and funky hockey apparel line. It will launch in time for Christmas."

What is one piece of advice you would give to anyone wanting to start their own business in the retail sports area?

"Have a passion for the sport. Everything I did up until now was for this moment."

| Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell, special to The Star

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