

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS



Emily Fiorentino

King City, Ontario, Canada

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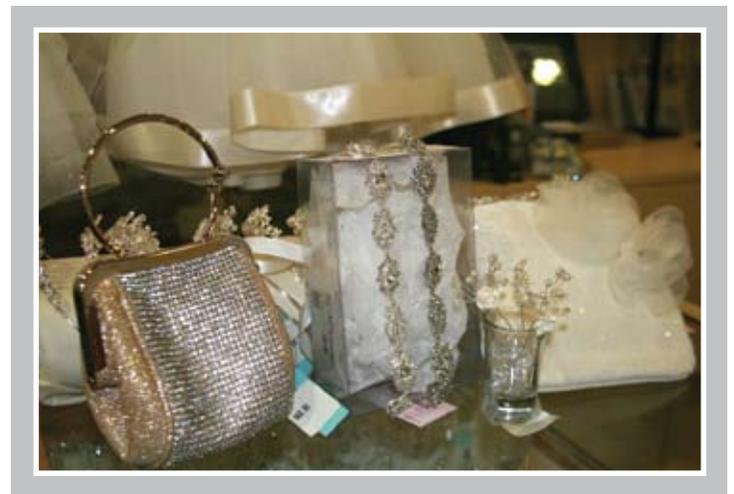
Kid's Country opened in August of 1987, and is now in its 28th year of operation. Originally owned by Carmela D'Andrea, it was purchased in 2008 by her long-time employee, Emily Fiorentino, who had worked there since she was 16 years old. Carmela had always believed that Emily would take over the shop, and continued to manage the store until Emily was ready to take it over full-time, 20 years later.

The People

Emily worked for Carmela as a student, having been referred to the owner by a family that had been frequent customers of Carmela's for years, and for whom Emily worked for many years. She enrolled in York University, but switched to Humber College where she graduated with honours from the Early Childhood Education Program.

Her path changed direction when she married and had children. She continued to work part-time at Kid's Country on Saturdays. Emily stayed at home to look after her son and identical twin girls until all were in school full-time, while opening her home to looking after other children at the same time. With the children in school full-time, she decided to buy Kid's Country, and make it her own full-time business.

Kid's Country is truly a family business. Emily's mom, an employee at St. Thomas of Villa Nova, helps in the store whenever needed, usually later in the afternoon or on a Saturday. Carlo, the younger of Emily's two brothers, has been involved since she bought the business. He is also an entrepreneur, operating a wedding and event planning business. Carlo has played a significant role in assisting the children of customers frequenting the store in making their wardrobe choices.



They value his input and perspective, making a different connection than with the proprietress. Emily's aunt also is available to help on occasion. Emily's twin girls, now 13 years old, have provided assistance, as well. Sometimes they have modelled clothing for customers, who have children or grandchildren of similar age, or have made style suggestions. Two part-time young ladies also work in the store, as needed, during the week and on weekends.

Emily values the importance in consistency when serving customers, so anyone working in the store knows to treat the customer with the same attention and respect.

Prosperous, innovative businesses that adapt to change from generation to generation contribute to a sustainable King.

Kid's Country Children's Boutique Inc.

The Product

The store is filled with top-quality brands. There are clothing items to meet the wardrobe needs of new-borns to 16-year-olds. Casual wear is available, but the focus tends to be more on 'dressy' items and clothing for special occasions: baptism, communion, confirmation, graduation, weddings, and other special family celebrations. New ladies' lines have been introduced for the secondary school young adult and moms alike.



Top quality designer brands are purchased to meet customer demand. Some products are Canadian-made, while others are imported from the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and other countries offering high quality-made items. Over 50 different brands are carried in the store. Emily has found that being 'married' to a particular line does not always work. Ultimately, customer demands dictate product lines. The preferences of the customer base can change, as can the quality of the product, should the manufacturer or owner change.

Clothing collections are coordinated with shoes and other accessories to encompass a one-stop shopping experience. Many of the accessories are hand-made by small independent businesses, focussing on unique and customized designs. New collections are being added to meet the needs of the children as they mature, beyond the age of 16 years.

There are many factors to consider in a single order. A great deal is speculation, as it is often a challenge to forecast what the next fashion season will feature. There is a delicate balance to determine the correct number of styles, sizes, colours to order. Possible delays in shipment, for a variety of reasons, must also be factored into the mix. Then there is also the human element. The order may be perfect, but at the buying end, the customer may have a change of mind in what is chosen.

The Performance

Although customer preferences have changed, expectations have not. High standards of performance ensure customer satisfaction. Kid's Country is now dressing the grand children of families who originally shopped in the store in the 1980's. Looking ahead, it is important to give consideration to maintaining the existing customer base, regardless of age. In this technological age, communication is key;



and Kid's Country Children's Boutique Inc. has a presence on line at www.kidscountry.ca and on Instagram, Facebook, and Google. Sustainability and growth is a plan, involving being flexible, being aware of changes in the industry, and listening carefully to the customer.

A high level of customer satisfaction reflects positively on the store. Kid's Country has a strong customer base of repeat customers. Reputation is passed along by 'word-of-mouth', with referrals in high numbers.

Serving a third generation of customer, the question continues to be "What does the customer need?" The challenge is to meet that need; and Kid's Country has been doing just that for years.



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