



Owner Suzanne Edwards



SO MANY THINGS!

Rings and Things

By Christina Levere

One word comes to mind when you walk through the door of Rings and Things in downtown Colchester: inviting. The smell of lavender, citrus and honeysuckle waft through the air. Glass blown ornaments, hand-painted pottery, pretty trinkets and silver jewelry gleam from the shelves. Beeswax candles and aromatherapy patches and satchels fill bookcases. Colorful paintings, miniature pictures and scarves adorn the walls. Hand-crafted handbags and chic apparel sit on tables and hooks. A display case of eye-catching fine jewelry — sapphires, emeralds, rubies, diamonds and more — beckons.

You'll probably need to stand in place for a moment to take in all the inventory.

It's just the atmosphere owner Suzanne Edwards was going for.

"This is my happy place," she said.

The amply-filled two-room space is a far cry from its starting point in August 2015, when Edwards took over the lease and opened what she thought might simply be a jewelry store.

"My background is in fine jewelry. I worked for a jewelry store in Connecticut for 17 years. It's what I know."

While employed at the jewelry store, Edwards traveled to Virginia for a six-week gold-smithing course, but when she returned home, she realized her heart wasn't into it.

"I wanted to be up front, interacting with people. I didn't want to live behind the scenes."



Luckily, things have fallen into place in regards to managing that "big space" thanks to a few methods she's employed. She takes day trips around Connecticut and the surrounding states to look for unique, American-made products she might like to carry. (You won't find big brand names such as Alex and Ani or Vera Bradley in this store; Edwards seeks out local artists and businesses that are family owned, as well as up-cycled and recycled art). She "internet stalks" artists or crafters — again, many of them local and almost all of them creating American-made products — and contacts them to see if they'd like to showcase their wares at the store. And finally, because she has built a reputation of being artist-friendly, they simply come to her.

"People stop in all the time and ask if we'll carry their products."

That's how jeweler Laura Tyrol's necklaces and earrings ended up in the store. "A friend of my sister's would come into Rings and Things and she suggested I bring my product in, and I did. It's been working out great," Tyrol said.

The collaborative spirit has worked out so great, in fact, that Edwards' former question of 'how' has become, "Where are we going to put this?"

Indeed. If the next three years go as well as the first, Edwards might have to inquire about leasing the upstairs space as well.

So she left the job and tried a work-from-home stint, which, according to Edwards just confirmed what she felt in her heart: "It wasn't for me. I really wanted to be with people."

Then one day, she and her husband Josh were driving by and saw a "for rent" sign in the window of the former Quality Consignments shop.

"[My husband and I] said to each other, 'Let's just go in and see.' It felt right. It felt like something we should do." According to Edwards, opening her own business suddenly seemed the perfect marriage of her skillset and her entrepreneurial personality. "It was exciting to think I could create something in my own vision, and not someone else's."

She started with a few local lines — Silver Forest jewelry, pottery from a potter in New Hampshire and candles made by a Connecticut crafter — and one room. She now carries work from more than 50 artists and leases both storefront rooms of the building.

"When we opened the second room, the walls were empty and I thought, 'How am I going to fill this space?' Who knew it would get this big!" she said, gesturing around her.

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Rings and Things is at 44 Main St. in Colchester. Call (860) 889-3535 or visit ringsandthingsct.com. Store hours are Monday: closed; Tuesday: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesday through Friday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.