

Ana Banana: special name, special place

Specialty store for babies and toddlers has a little bit of everything that comes with a friendly smile

BY RON BARRY

Elliana Clinch is going to know the truth some day – she’s going to put two and two together and conclude that mommy and daddy’s baby products store is named after her.

Amy Clinch, the mom, can’t wait. “I’m excited for when the day comes when she does understand where the names comes from,” she said of Ana Banana, which has opened a new store at East Point Shopping. “She knows the name of the store, but she’s only three and doesn’t understand that it’s named after her. It will be a very exciting day.”

The ‘Ana Banana’ connection is neat – it’s actually Elliana’s nickname.

“Since she was a week old I was calling her Ana Banana,” said Amy. “I thought, ‘you know what – that’s a catchy name for a store’. That’s how the name came about. I have since found that a lot of people relate to the name. I even people tell me ‘oh my gosh, I call my Hannah ‘Hannah Banana’ – I hear those types of stories”

Nicknames aside, Amy and Jonathan Clinch actually began their entrepreneurial journey because of their daughter. An expectant mom, Amy found herself shopping all over the place trying to get the products she was looking for, and it was proving to be a challenge.

“At the time, Moncton was the only major city in the Atlantic provinces that didn’t have a baby specialty store,” said Amy. “Saint John did have one, but it has since closed. We saw the need for a specialty store, one that offered everything from clothing, feeding and toys, all the way to car seats, strollers, cribs, dressers and gliders - a little bit of everything”

The store was founded in 2012 at its Moncton location – Hildegard Plaza on Mountain Road – and caught on



Amy and Jonathan Clinch, entrepreneurs with Ana Banana, a speciality store for babies and toddlers. PHOTO: KEITH HAWKINS

nicely, so much so that a Saint John location seemed to be the next logical step. As Amy explains, products don’t hit their shelves by accident.

“They are carefully selected and high-quality, made from sustainable materials and are in-demand products that have never been available around here,” she said. “We also seek out Canadian-made products – we focus on environmental and organic products so you’re really coming into a store that has a lot to offer your baby or your toddler. We also focus on safety features; you’re not just buying a product, you’re buying a service. We really enjoy helping to guide parents in the right direction.”

Ana Banana’s Saint John opening is timely – November brings the Christmas shopping season into full bloom as consumers are triggered by two words – Black Friday. Amy is aware of the connection, as are all retailers.

“November and December are very, very important shopping months,” she said, “and they are to us, too. But there are babies born all year long, so we’re a bit lucky in that way.”

She’s also a proponent when it comes to shopping locally – “with everything that’s happening in our province, it’s more important than ever to support local businesses and help them grow. We actually have a lot of talent who have amazing products. When I shop, I focus a lot on local businesses. When I’m shopping in Saint John, I like Je Suis Prest Boutique – I love clothing stores. I like going to Liquid Gold. I’m somewhat new here, but I will do 99 per cent of my Christmas shopping at local businesses.”

As a small business owner, she is encouraged by the array of shopping experiences people can find around New Brunswick.

“There’s a huge trend going toward places with character and different ideas and developing technology and I find that the major cities in New Brunswick are actually doing a really good job with it,” she said. “There are amazing restaurants coming out, all kinds of different clothing stores and in my case, baby stores. New Brunswick is doing very well bringing character to their cities.”

When asked about her favourite time

of the year to shop, Amy laughs as she lets the cat out of the bag: “I love shopping all year long. November and December have a lot more meaning though, because you’re shopping for friends and family during a special time and you’re putting a lot of thought into these gifts. I mean, people are Christmas shopping now.”

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