

SHANNALEE®



Owner: Shanna Lee
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SHANNALEE is a wonderful little boutique wedged between a yarn studio and a shoe shop in downtown Fargo. The store is named for its owner, Shanna Lee, who graduated from U.N.D., left the state, was a Flight Attendant for Delta Airlines, and was an executive in the manufacturing and sales side of the golf clothing industry. After 20 years away, Shanna decided to return to North Dakota. She says, "I was tired of corporate America and traffic and missed my family, so I decided to come back and own a boutique; owning a boutique was always something I wanted to do, so I thought this would be a good place to give it a try."

Her first stop was the SCORE office in Fargo, where she was connected with a retired businessman who helped her put the nuts and bolts of a business plan together. The Small Business Development Center in Fargo helped her secure a loan with US Bank. She says, "I'm kind of an artist and a dreamer and a salesperson, but as far as a business plan and projections and profit and loss, I wasn't really clear about how all that worked, so they helped me quite a bit with that."

Before she settled on a location, Shanna spent many days studying downtown traffic flow and parking. She decided to open her "variety store" at 313 Broadway because she says the location is "fabulous!" Directly across from the Fargo Theatre, SHANNALEE is the kind of place you stumble upon and then never want to leave. The minute you walk in, you are greeted and offered coffee with a napkin that says, "You look great. Who did it and how much?" The store carries quirky little things like that. You can find doggie bowls and chew toys next to green tea candles and zodiac key rings, calendars, books and body sprays. There are Barbie t-shirts with a bit of humor and jewelry resting on smooth black rocks. But the mainstay of the store is clothing. The fabrics are ultra soft, ultra light, and easy care. Blue jeans are mingled with textured hats, scarves and handbags. Gorgeous jackets adorn the walls. The prices are what you'd expect in an upscale boutique, but the more you hang around, the more you want to own a piece of SHANNALEE!

"Through all my travels, I've been in hundreds of boutiques and never found one I truly loved; that I could just go in and go nuts and buy a little bit of everything—things for myself and presents for other people. So I just kind of made a road map for myself of what I would like to see as a professional shopper," she says.

Shanna breaks the cardinal rule of owning a store because she buys what SHE likes. But it works well for her, because she says the support from the Fargo-Moorhead community has been great. Her clients are businesswomen who don't have much time to shop, downtown workers, weekenders out for a stroll, hospital employees, and hospital visitors looking for a gift. With all the walk-by traffic, Shanna re-merchandises the boutique daily. "I want women to come in here, try something on, love it, their heads held a bit higher. Anything I can do to make people's lives easier, they're usually willing to pay for—it's such a fast-paced world."

SHANNALEE provides gift wrap, shipping, and delivery services. She also opens her boutique to private parties. Shirl, Shanna's mom, helps out part time. While mom may whisper to you that the cute little red dress you've had your eye on is from London, Lee won't give anything away. She admits she buys many of her items from the talented designers, artists and mentors she's had the privilege to work with over the years, but where she actually buys her merchandise is "Top Secret!"

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