

Crossroads



Jackie Vinyard (right) takes care of customer Louise O'Briant at The Gathering Place. The store sells historical items and brings in Amish baked goods on Fridays.

The News Journal/JENNIFER CORBETT

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Jackie Vinyard's store is one of the stars of the downtown Smyrna scene

By CAROL CHILD

Special to The News Journal

SMYRNA — When you stop in and chat with Jackie Vinyard at The Gathering Place, aromas of soaps, herbs, spices, teas and coffees greet you.

Your eyes feast on anything Smyrna-related, such as wood-carvings, stained glass, wrought iron, books, music and reprints of Historic Smyrna.

"I try to sell things that you just can't get at Wal-Mart and with utmost customer service," said Vinyard. She sells items such as Tiger Balm and Smyrna honey, and might hand you a lavender cake recipe.

"I wanted to learn about the local history of the town so I could spread the news and keep the memories alive. The customers create the warm atmosphere in my store. They come and gather and tell their stories whether it be stories of yesterday or what's happening in their worlds today."

Linda Noland has been a

FYI

**The Gathering Place
(Herbs, Spices, Teas,
Coffee & Oddities)**

LOCATION: 11 W. Commerce St., Smyrna.

INFORMATION: 659-5123

HOURS: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Thu., 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-4p.m. Sat.; and 5:30-8 p.m. Wed. for the holidays. Closed Thanksgiving.

customer since the store opened in 2000.

"The first and the best thing I remember is Jackie's genuine and welcoming smile, which continues," Noland said. "I fixed on the shelves carrying beautiful fresh herbs and spices in large glass jars. You know people use herbs to cook, and here you can buy them in the amount you want. She has interesting and unusual gift items, too.



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The oddities sold at The Gathering Place include stars, birdhouses and other decorative items.

Store: That small-town charm

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"I am very appreciative of her desire to build up the downtown area. She is involved in the larger picture, not thinking only of herself," said Noland, a Smyrna native.

Vinyard, who based The Gathering Place on stores her mother and sister had owned in Lewes (All About Herbs and The Herb Shop), figured if she was going to open a business, she'd better get involved in the town. A married mother of two, she presides over the Smyrna Downtown Merchants Association, serves on the board of directors of the Smyrna Main Street Association and is active in Smyrna schools.

Born in Omaha, Neb., Vinyard lived in an Iowa town similar to Smyrna. She grew up in Dover from age 6 and moved to Smyrna in 1988.

"I was drawn to Smyrna mainly because of the small-town atmosphere, and the Fourth of July Parades," Vin-

yard said.

"I would visit on the Fourth of July as a child and remember the fun of the day's festivities. We would go and watch the parade as a church social and eat all day and then wait for the darkness to come so that we could watch the fireworks. I watched the camaraderie of the schools and knew that I wanted to raise my family in the Smyrna schools."

Vinyard loves what she calls Smyrna's "basement dirt history" - stories that an alligator once lived in the Tilgham Building basement and that the Underground Railroad ran right through town.

"The wall of the closet on the third floor of the Phillips Building doesn't meet up with the back wall of the building, and there is a space large enough for three men to stand shoulder to shoulder," said Vinyard.

Or, that Smyrna people may have pirate's blood in them from back in the days when Blackbird

Forest was Blackbeard Forest, so named when Blackbeard the pirate pillaged up and down the Atlantic coast and hid in Blackbird Creek from British naval forces, where it's said he buried treasure.

"Jackie's a real sparkplug," said Ron Sayres, owner of Sayres Jewelers and Gemologists, a downtown Smyrna business fixture for generations. "She is very energetic and always has a promotion or something to keep things going."

Sparking imaginations this year is the Dec. 12 gingerbread house-building contest at Gingerbread Candyland, to be held at the Smyrna Opera House during Smyrna's fifth annual Historic Candlelight Holiday Walking Tour. Children and adults wishing to enter can contact Vinyard at The Gathering Place.

"We should offer festivities for the children, so that they will have warm, fuzzy memories that will bring them back to

PROFILE

Jackie Vinyard

AGE: 40

FAMILY: Married since 1985 to John Vinyard from St. Louis; daughters Katie, 12, and Kerstin, 8

RESIDENCE: Smyrna

EDUCATION: Graduated from Dover High School in 1983

COMMUNITY SERVICE: Serves on Smyrna Elementary School parent advisory board and works as a substitute teacher; was a crossing guard.

Smyrna when they get older," foresees Vinyard.

"You know, the children are our future as well. They will become the doctors and nurses and lawyers that will take care of us when we are all older. They are our future historians."

C H R I
OPEN

Fri. Nov. 26, 8-5 a Sat.

Crossroads

KENT COUNTY,
SUSSEX COUNTY
AND THE
DELMARVA REGION



NOTEBOOK JACK IRELAND

Laurel grad 2nd in NCCA rankings

Senior back Courtney Hughes of Laurel was more than just a solid defensive player this fall for the Davidson (N.C.) College field hockey team.

Hughes, a Laurel High graduate, was so good on defense she was like a second goalie on the field. She finished the season tied for second among NCAA Division I players in defensive saves (nine) and average defensive saves (0.5).

She picked up her ninth defensive save in a Northern Pacific Field Hockey Conference Tournament loss to the University of California on Nov. 4. Laura Mecchella of Siena (N.Y.) led the nation in each category, with 12 defensive saves in 14 games and a 0.857 average.

Hughes, who had two assists this year, was voted to the NorPac All-Conference first team and the NorPac Championship All-Tournament team. She became Davidson's first all-tournament player since 2000.



Courtney Hughes