



SIUE grad celebrates business expansion with RunWell Grand Opening Feb. 27

February 25 2016 10:24 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - For Southern Illinois University Edwardsville graduate and small business owner **Jen Schaller**, it has always been about sharing her passion for running. Starting on Saturday, Feb. 27, Schaller will have three times the amount of space to conduct her business of connecting with runners from across the St. Louis region.

Schaller developed her love for running in a freshman jogging class at SIUE. After graduating in 1999 with a bachelor's in accounting from SIUE's School of Business, Schaller competed successfully in a number of races that led to an opportunity to instruct other runners. After 10 years as a running coach, Schaller thought it was time to open a place that would allow her to share this affinity with many others.

RunWell, a store dedicated to runners, opened in a small retail space in downtown Edwardsville in June 2013 while Schaller was still working part-time as an accountant in St. Louis.

"I was humbled by how quickly the running community embraced my vision for RunWell," said Schaller. "To achieve that vision, RunWell's mission has two key components. The first is providing high-quality products that exceed customer expectations. The second, more importantly, is to offer events that bring runners of all skill levels together on a regular basis."

Schaller's ability to create a supportive community for runners has paid off. "We've taken people who've never run before and built them up slowly. A number of our first-time runners have progressed to running marathons," she added with pride.

As this community of runners has grown along with the number of RunWell sponsored events, the need for more space became apparent.

"It's not uncommon for us to attract 40 to 50 runners every Wednesday evening for our group run," she said. "Our small retail area and training room along with one tiny bathroom made it tight. Our new space has 2,700 square feet of retail, multiple bath and dressing rooms, and another 1,700 square feet in a finished basement for storage."

Patrick McKeehan, director of the Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center at SIUE, said Schaller became one of his first clients when he began with the SBDC three years ago.

"I'm extremely proud of Jen's success," said McKeehan, who has provided no-cost business counseling and marketing advice to Schaller since she opened her doors. "Jen's focus on meeting customer needs is admirable. Her ability to create a highly loyal and passionate community of followers is truly amazing and inspiring."

RunWell's new storefront is at **142 North Main Street** in downtown Edwardsville at the intersection of North Main and St. Louis Streets, one block north of its previous location. The retailer is celebrating a soft opening from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 26 and a grand opening from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 27. Runners of all ages and skill levels, along with community members, are welcome to join in the day-long celebration.

The Metro East SBDC assists small business owners like Schaller as well as entrepreneurs looking to start in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph counties. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses.

SBDCs in Illinois are funded, in part, through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity and [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) as a service to the community. To learn how these no-cost services may help your business venture, contact the [Metro East SBDC](#) at [\(618\) 650-2929](tel:(618)650-2929) or sbdcedw@gmail.com.