

Granny's Uniforms: Work Fashion and so much more

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Her name may be Sheila Curry, but her customers know her as "Granny."

Granny owns Granny's Uniforms Work Fashions and More, an authorized Dickies retailer located at 2525 College Avenue in Alton. She started the business with her family in 2011, and continues to serve nearly every walk of life from her hub in the Riverbend. Granny and her family were recently chosen as Alton's Small Business of the Year as part of the city's Altonian of the Year campaign, and were presented with a plaque from Alton Mayor Brant Walker at the Alton City Council meeting Wednesday, Jan. 24.

"Alton has been supportive of us," Granny said as she scrolled through photos of enthusiastic customers on her phone. "People come in from all different careers, and we do our best to help them all get what they need."

Her shop is filled wall to wall with pants, belts, shirts, boots and anything else needed for professional life. She said her business assists students in Lewis and Clark Community College's nursing and automotive programs as well as the Housing Authorities of Collinsville and Alton. Granny said even the Alton Police Chief Jake Simmons and Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold purchase clothing from her store.

Eddie Curry, Granny's son, who helps with the family business said the quality of customer experience is important, because the quality of clothing made by Dickies does not make for much repeat business from individuals.

"We had a man in his 80s and buy five pairs of pants," Eddie Curry said. "He said he wouldn't be back for a long time. To me, your clothing is an investment, not something to be washed a few times and thrown away. We would rather have good quality of clothing, instead of unhappy customers. Just because they won't be back right away, doesn't mean they can't tell their friends about us."



Entrepreneurship has ran strong through the family, Eddie Curry said. He described himself as a "lifelong entrepreneur" alongside his family.

Previous to opening Granny's Uniforms, the Curry family operated Squeaky Clean Washing and Janitorial Service, which once served the St. Louis Mills Mall. One of the clients of the company was the Dickies outlet store in that mall.

After that store closed, Granny said the managerial staff asked if she knew anyone who could use some clothing racks. At the time, she thought she wanted to open a clothing retail office, so she said she could use them.

"One thing led to another, and now we're our own Dickies store," Granny said.

While Granny may be across the river from the former Mills Mall, customers still flock to her store from St. Charles County as well as from across the entire Metro East.

Customers to the store can find whatever fits them in the store usually, but if they cannot, Curry said they could be ordered for an absolute perfect fit. Granny added everything from suspenders to belts to wallets, and even stethoscopes could be ordered from the store, which intends to be a one-stop service for all work-related clothing and accessory needs.

When asked about the small business culture of the area, Granny proudly showed a photo of a fruit arrangement sent to her from a local business, adding how happy she is to see once-vacant buildings in Pie Town get new life through small businesses. She said she is happy to be a part of that community.

"People come in here and look at their watch and wonder how they could have spent 45 minutes in here," she said. "They come in and we get to talking. It's a very mom-and-pop business feel in here, and I think people in the community really enjoy that."

Embroidery for the clothing purchased at the store is outsourced to local professionals from her shop, granny added.

Granny accepted the award for Alton's Small Business of the Year accompanied by Curry and her granddaughter, Erica Johnson.

"Ericka is a great help," Granny said. "She worked part time at the KFC on Broadway, and then come into the shop and help for three to four hours, before going to her next job that evening. That's how dedicated she is to helping out."

Johnson currently manages several stores in St. Louis and still contributes to the business she also constructed much of the signage and displays inside the store.

Granny's Uniforms can be reached at (618) 462-2669. Orders can also be placed on www.grannysworkfashions.com, and can be shipped to homes and offices for as low as \$2.50.

