

Store-owning dream becomes reality for 1904 General store matriarch

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - For small business owner and Alton resident **Christine Velloff**, a life-changing loss can inspire one to follow their dreams.

“My college roommate died from brain cancer last September,” Velloff said, “I thought, life is too short. I knew then I was ready to do something different.”

This tragic event caused Velloff, who had been a landlord for over 30 years, to make a lifelong dream of owning a business a reality. And thus, **1904 General Store** was born.

“I had admired this building for a long time,” Velloff said, referring to the building located at **322 E. Broadway** in downtown Alton, “the candy shop idea just fell into line.”

The shop is stocked with delectable fudge and a plentiful supply of candy that is sure to satisfy any sweet tooth. Jars containing color-coded Sixlets line one of the store’s walls. Shelves are stacked with classic candies, caramel corn, almonds and peanuts, salt water taffy and much more.



Velloff had the entire building gutted and refaced, exposing the upstairs’ gift shop’s rafters, which include wood from the **1904 World’s Fair**. She embraced the German woodworking and aimed to maintain the stylistic charm that has graced the Alton area since 1905.

The upstairs gift shop is a home décor lover’s dream. Furniture, decorations, knick-knacks, and handmade signs fill the space. One wall of the gift shop is designed to look like a front porch of a home.

“I had a vision for the porch design,” Velloff said, “we used recycled materials I have collected over the years to make it look more authentic.”



“I am enjoying decorating and selling the seasonal items in the gift shop” Velloff said, “Since we opened in late May, this is the first opportunity I had to do this with the fall



items. “

With the help of her daughters, who had just come home from college for summer break, Velloff opened 1904 General Store in late May 2015.

“Business has been pretty steady, Velloff said. “We’re slowly expanding our gift line and word is getting out that we are here.” Now that her daughters are back in college for the semester, Velloff hired a family friend to help out at the shop.

“The excitement of something new is definitely my favorite part of owning 1904. After being a landlord for so many years, this has been really exciting to do.”

1904 General Store is open on **Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** and on **Sunday from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

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