

experience downtown #1 fond du lac

DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC Partnership
Come together.
DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC

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Upcoming events in downtown Fond du Lac



Local flower shop offers personal European feel

Dorothy Bliskey | Special to The Reporter

When Judy Pierner opened Personal Touch Flowers and Gifts at 14-16 E. Second St. nine years ago, she was near the age many begin to retire.

Now 70, she is still far from a retirement frame of mind. Instead she thrives on the hustle and bustle of her dream-come-true business — one she perfected in her mind during the 28 years she worked for others in the floral business.

“How many people would start a business at 60?” Pierner asks. “You need to have a passion for what you do.”

Pierner took her wealth of experience in the field and infused her shop with enthusiasm, expert designers, an accountant from her prior work arena, a dynamic sales team and delivery drivers to transport quality products with a smile. She hired a local artist to hand-paint murals on the walls for an eye-appealing backdrop for her products.

“I wanted a shop that added that personal touch,” Pierner said. That was the basis for the name of her shop.

Old World touches

She also wanted her business to mimic the quaint little shops in Europe, lavishly decked with all the soft, Old World touches to make it warm and inviting.

Today, Pierner is living her dream. Her business has grown. Customers have come out of the woodwork, from near and far.

Elegant fabrics, ribbons, area rugs and wall murals lend a soft, warm European feel as customers browse through various vignettes in the shop. Each area depicts a specific occasion, room, style of decorating or type of product.

There’s the alluring wedding consultation area, complete with window treatments and furniture that lends a touch of elegance, and a serene and comforting gathering space for funeral consultations.

The Victorian area boasts a fireplace for a cozy, back-in-time feel and is accented with rich velvet draperies that add upscale European flair.

The kitchen nook is brimming with décor that includes roosters, apples, centerpieces, vases and more. Outdoor decorating needs can be found in the garden area filled with decorative stones, colorful mobiles, garden stakes, birdbaths and statuary.

The gourmet food station offers gift-wrapped boxes of Hughes candy, gourmet gift baskets and unique candy

bar arrangements designed like a flower bouquet.

Personal Touch is also known for its high-end quality silks and greenery and its European dish gardens. Room fragrances, candles, balloons, plush animals, decorative lamps, angels, memorial stones, artwork and a line of personal body care products add to the mix.

“We always carry a wow item,” says Pierner, pointing to an iridescent piece of wall art consisting of shiny metal floral-like disks arranged in a scattered pattern. The disks shimmer in shades of green, gold and burgundy with a blast of sparkle in the center of each.

Half of the store space is devoted to fresh flowers, blooming plants, green plants, a garden area, and a seasonally decorated storefront that lures people. Four designers busily work to meet event deadlines, customer requests and to create in-store arrangements for off the shelf purchases.

Designers

“Everything we have on display is our own design,” Pierner said. “We don’t carry any pre-designed arrangements — our designers do them all in-house.”

Pierner and her designers will also do in-home consultations. “I love to decorate — it’s my passion,” Pierner said. “I think it’s a part of my makeup.”

She will go to a home or business to give suggestions or to do the decorating there.

“It’s also a fun process when a customer brings in fabric samples, and we start picking out containers and accessories with them,” she says. “We let them choose, but we lead them with our expertise. We help them create something spectacular.”

The uniqueness of her shop is noticed by others.

“A businessman from out-of-state was driving by and was lured in by our display windows,” she recalled. “He told me our shop looks like it’s right out of Europe — that it’s like a diamond-in-the-rough. I feel the diamond is the exquisite work we do and the rough is the humility we work with.”

She said the employees at Personal Touch quietly go about their business and give to the community in ways the general public doesn’t realize.

“Attention to detail and extending that personal touch is what we are all



service

touch,



THE REPORTER PHOTOS BY PATRICK FLOOD

TOP LEFT: Judy Pierner owns Personal Touch Flowers and Gifts at 14-16 E. Second St. MIDDLE RIGHT: Nancy Kohlmann is the head designer at Personal Touch. Designers do all the flower arrangements in-house at the business.

about,” Pierner says. “Every budget deserves a personal touch. Even a child coming in to buy a single rose for his mother’s birthday will take that rose home wrapped in pretty paper, tied

with a ribbon and kept fresh with the little water tube at the base of the stem. It doesn’t matter how much a person spends in our shop; we package it beautifully for them.”



Flowers can be sent anywhere in the world at Personal Touch Flowers and Gifts with online Teleflora and FTD wire services. Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays during holidays. Phone: (920) 924-9399. Toll free: 1-800-459-8776.

service

Flooring and countertops available at businesses downtown

Dorothy Bliskey | Special to The Reporter



THE REPORTER PHOTOS BY PATRICK FLOOD

TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: Main products at Contorno Surfaces are granite and quartz countertops. ABOVE: The image of co-owner Gabriela DeLaTorre is reflected in the mirror of a sink display at Corntorno Surfaces, 15 N. Main St.



THE REPORTER PHOTO BY PATRICK FLOOD

ABOVE: JJC Flooring and Design, 84 S. Main St. has many different flooring and home interior options for customers to choose from.

Two downtown businesses put the focus on home improvements this spring.

Contorno Surfaces specializes in granite and quartz countertops for kitchens and bathrooms.

JJC Flooring and Design installs all types of floor coverings and window treatments.

Downtown business sells granite and quartz surfaces for countertops

Contorno Surfaces, 15 N. Main St., is a rock-solid business — one that attracts homeowners, cabinetmakers, homebuilders and remodelers from all over Wisconsin to downtown Fond du Lac.

Contorno's main products — granite and quartz countertops — are popular high-end stone surfaces in demand for new and updated kitchens and bathrooms across the country.

Gabriela and Paco DeLaTorre moved their family, including three children, from Houston, Texas, to Fond du Lac to open the business in 2004 after other family members had successfully paved the way in Minnesota with a similar business.

Gabriela manages Contorno Surfaces' downtown showroom, which showcases kitchen and bath countertop designs and offers free samples and in-home consultations. Paco oversees wholesale sales statewide.

The stone arrives from Europe and Brazil, with some coming from other countries, including the United States.

Preview

"All these stones come in slabs that are received and fabricated by AMC of Wisconsin located right here in Fond du Lac," Gabriela said. "Our customers have the option to preview the granite slabs there before fabrication, and they love that. Each piece is unique and has a lot of character."

Quartz and granite are durable and resistant to scratches, heat and stains.

"With quartz, our main line is Silestone because it is the leader brand and has the widest selection of colors available," she said.

Contorno's prices include measuring, digital layout and installation.

"Unlike some of our competitors, there are no extra charges for electrical cutouts, faucet holes, or angle cutting," Gabriela said.

An optional service includes removal of a customer's old countertops, which can then be donated to Habitat for Humanity for resale.

Sinks and faucets are available at Contorno Surfaces as well.

"We can't stress enough how important a quality sink and faucet complement the customer's investment since the holes drilled on the stone are made for the fixture selected and will be there for a long time," Gabriela said.

She says that the newest addition to their product line is stone panels for showers and bathtubs.

Homeowners

Homeowners are their main customers.

"They realize that an investment in the kitchen and bath areas gets the best return," said Gabriela.

The business also works closely with state and local builders, remodelers and cabinetmakers in the area.

Paco, who studied architecture at the University of Houston, and Gabriela, who earned a business degree from Texas A&M University, came to Fond du Lac after she had worked with her father in international business, and Paco had designed and built custom homes and commercial buildings with his father and brother-in-law.

One of Paco's longtime friends was the pioneer of Silestone quartz surfaces in the United States. He had worked with Paco on different projects, including design and construction of stone fabrication shops at Silestone's headquarters in Houston. It helped lay the groundwork for the couple's move from Texas to Wisconsin.

Pulling up stakes

"Silestone's sales skyrocketed during the early 2000s," Gabriela said. "Some of Paco's family had moved to Minnesota to distribute this product and soon decided to branch out and open the fabrication shop in Fond du Lac where the stone slabs are delivered and fabricated."

"His relatives called to ask us to consider moving here to help expand the business throughout Wisconsin. Fond du Lac was the perfect spot since we could access the main cities of Green Bay, Milwaukee and Madison in just one hour," she said.

When they first came to Fond du Lac in 2004, Gabriela and Paco had a small office in the Rolling Meadows Drive area.

"After our local sales started to grow, we decided to open our downtown showroom in 2006. It gave us more



For more details, go to www.contornosurfaces.com or call (920) 929-9288. Hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and other times by appointment. Email: info@contornosurfaces.com.



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service

THE REPORTER PHOTO BY PATRICK FLOOD

Farrah Ramminger stands inside the showroom at JJC Flooring and Design, 84 S. Main St. She took over ownership of the business in 2009.

exposure, and we could showcase larger pieces of stone and actual kitchen and bathroom applications.”

“Fond du Lac seemed like a great place to raise our kids (Rod, 17; Daniela, 12; and Diego, 11),” said Gabriela. “It was hard leaving our parents, our families and friends, but everyone supported our decision.”

Flooring options and more at JJC Flooring and Design

JJC Flooring and Design moved into 84 S. Main St. last year after first operating as JJC Interiors at 174 W. Division St.

In 2009, Farrah Ramminger took over ownership of the business from her mother, Jo Stanley, who originally started JJC Interiors with a team of employees — all who had worked in the flooring businesses previously. A list of faithful customers had followed them.

Ramminger, with a degree in marketing and six years of work experience at her mother’s business, was eager to take over and build on the success of her mother’s business and brought her mother on board as a design consultant.

Ramminger’s husband, Jason, is the lead installer, an estimator and sales representative. Seven employees keep the business running smoothly.

“This location is a great fit because it gives us more exposure and more walk-in traffic,” Ramminger said. “We also enjoy being involved in events that the Downtown Partnership holds throughout the year. My husband took second place in their chili cook-off last year.”

The store carries a selection of floor covering from carpeting, laminate and hardwoods to sheet vinyl, luxury vinyl tile,

planking and ceramic tile.

Other items carried include accent rugs, window treatments, custom draperies, custom furniture and home décor accents. Customers come from both the industrial and residential sectors.

Ramminger says flooring trends include the popularity of vinyl luxury flooring — a floor covering that mimics the look of real wood or ceramic tile.

“The customer can choose the option of having the tiles edged with grouting for that authentic ceramic tile appearance,” Ramminger said. “Without grouting, the vinyl luxury flooring has the look of a solid natural stone surface.”

“The advantages over real wood or ceramic tile are that the vinyl is softer and warmer on the feet. It’s also very durable, yet less expensive than the real ceramic or wood,” Ramminger said.

The wood look features beveled edges.

“It’s really hard to tell the difference between the vinyl and wood,” she said.

Trends in carpeting rival similar trends from the 1960s and 1970s. With carpeting, the sculptured look is in demand, giving the effect of a geometric pattern or ribbon-like ripple design on the carpet’s surface.

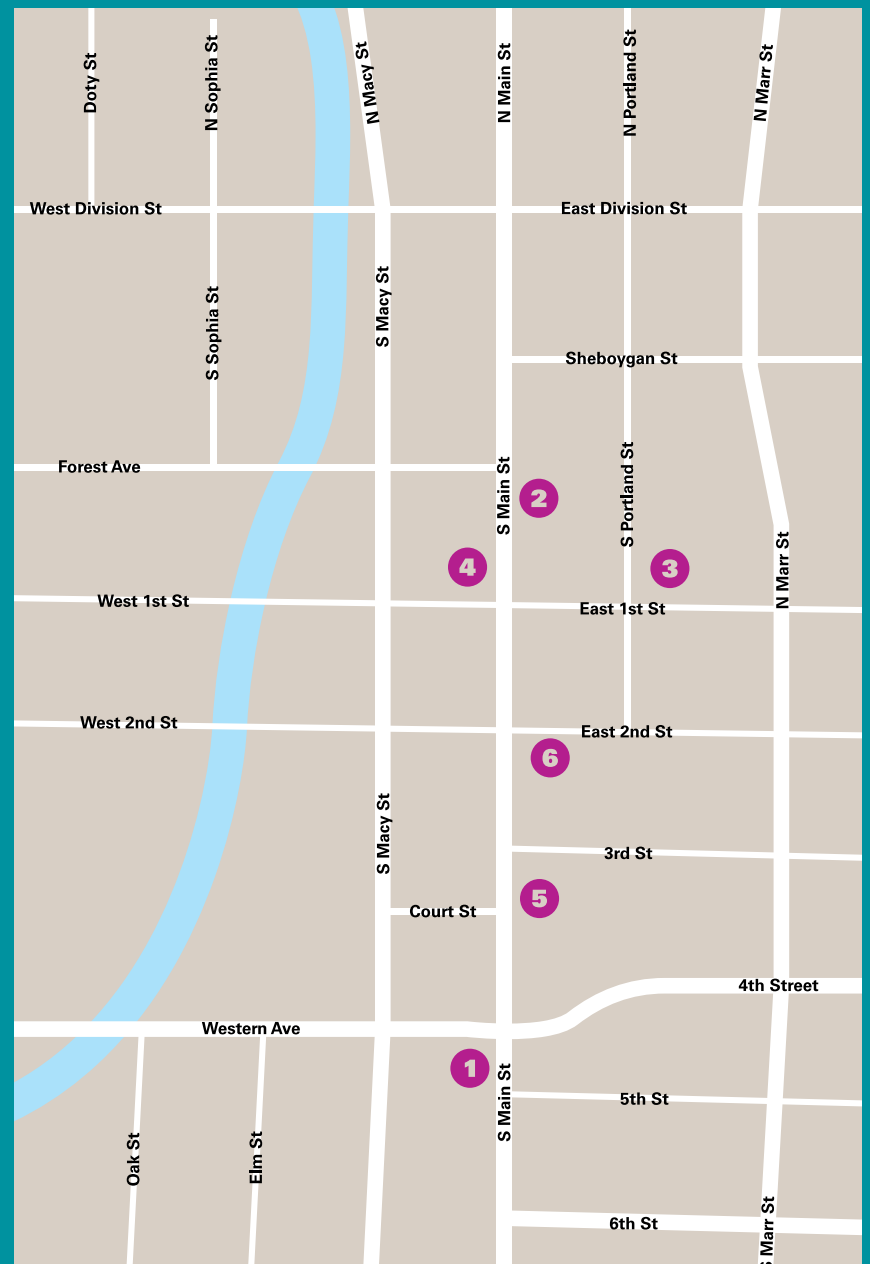
Thick, luxurious, shag-type styles of carpeting are also popular for a rich plush look, eliminating the need for the carpet rakes used on the less-dense shag styles of the ‘60s.

Services offered at JJC Flooring and Design include in-store or on-site free consultations, flooring estimates and professional installations.

“We insure all of our installers and guarantee customer satisfaction,” Ramminger said.

“It’s so satisfying to see the end product. Seeing the satisfaction on a customer’s face is priceless.”

downtown fond du lac
Map
DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC Partnership
Come together.
DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC



Advertising
hot spots!

- 1 - Ahern Gross, Inc.
- 2 - Focus, Inc.
- 3 - Fox Valley Savings Bank
- 4 - Gallery & Frame Shop
- 5 - Lillian’s
- 6 - Personal Touch Flowers & Gifts

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www.FVSBank.com



what's happening?



For more information on what's happening in downtown Fond du Lac, call **920.921.9500** or log on to **www.downtownfdl.com**

Wednesday, May 25**Painting Class**

Jennabee Art Gallery & Studio, 87 S. Main Street, Fond du Lac. 920-517-8114; 7:00-8:00pm. \$10 per class. Oil, Acrylic, and Watercolor. Each week we will be learning a new skill specific to the classes needs. Bring your own materials \$10. To use the Gallery materials \$15.

Saturday, May 28**Acoustic Spoken Word**

Jennabee Art Gallery & Studio, 920-517-8114. 2 to 4 pm. Poetry, music, singing, and other talents! Whatever your talent is come and share it with us. Musicians please note this is unplugged, limited to hand held instruments.

Sunday, June 19**Build it with Dad**

Childrens Museum of Fond du Lac, 51 Sheboygan Street, Fond du Lac. 10-4pm. \$4.25. Call 920-929-0707 for details.

Thursday, June 23

Downtown Morning Exchange, sponsored by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership. 8 to 9 a.m. Here's a chance to meet your fellow downtown business associates, share a cup of coffee and friendship, along with the latest downtown news from the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership. Call 921-9500 for details.

Friday, June 24**Fond du Lac Bicycling Gran Prix**

Sponsored by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership. Fond du Lac is busy planning its third year of downtown bicycle races. We have races for licensed racers, a high school race, and kids! The Gran Prix is part of an 11-day series of amateur and professional bicycle races licensed under USA Cycling. We have some great, involved sponsors and planning partners. Our race is held on downtown Fond du Lac streets, filled with beautiful and historic buildings. We have lots of great places to eat, drink, and just hang out.

Farmer's Markets

Shopping at a farmers market is a great way to meet local farmers and get fresh, flavorful produce. Sponsored by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership.

Wednesdays - 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Hamilton Parking Lot, Division & Sophia

Saturdays - 7 a.m. to Noon. City - County Parking Lot, Western & Linden

Sunday Stories

Childrens Museum of Fond du Lac, 51 Sheboygan Street, Fond du Lac. 11:30 am-12pm. \$4.25 per guest, infants under 1 are free. Every Sunday. Call 920-929-0707 for details. Museum visitors are invited to hear a story enhanced with creative dramatics and group participation. Featuring selections from the New York Public Library's "100 Picture Books Everyone Should Know", participants will be inspired by literature to create art and fun! Program is free with paid admission. No reservations are necessary.

Experience Downtown Fond du Lac

Downtown Fond du Lac invites you to experience, explore, and enjoy all that our downtown has to offer. Whether it's a first meeting or you're catching up, downtown Fond du Lac is a perfect destination. Unique shops, galleries and a range of dining experiences make downtown Fond du Lac an ideal place for you and your friends to come together. On behalf of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership we invite you to Come Together and see what the downtown has for you.

Special events are always attracting friends. We are particularly proud of the special events and activities we are able to offer in downtown Fond du Lac. Throughout the year there are community events, educational opportunities and festivals that make downtown Fond du Lac a hub of activity in our region. Check the schedule and then call your friends to come together for special fun.

Calendar of Events

Sidewalk Sale - Saturday, July 9

Fondue Fest - Saturday, September 10

Monster March - Saturday, October 29

Holiday Open House Weekend - November 11 - 13

Home for the Holidays - Saturday, December 3

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3

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68

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1

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For more information, visit the350project.net

The 3/50 Project started with a simple premise - if everyone would just pick 3 local stores and spend \$50 a month at those stores, what a vibrant local economy any city would have.

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Join Cinda Baxter, founder of The 3/50 Project, as she tells her story of how this all started, and how we can join in. Cinda understands small business from the inside out, having been a retailer herself. Her mission is simple: "Saving the Brick and Mortars Our Nation Is Built On".

The 3/50 Project is brought to you by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership. The mission of the partnership, a Wisconsin Main Street community, is to establish a diverse, prosperous and healthy district that is the social, commercial and cultural heart of our community.

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