

THORNES

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For immediate release.

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Cedar Chest and Stay Golden in Thornes Marketplace Change Hands
Lauren Gunther and Alex Feinstein purchase the stores from Rich Madowitz

NORTHAMPTON—Two longtime, downtown businesspeople, Lauren Gunther and Alex Feinstein, have together purchased two stores in Thornes Marketplace—Cedar Chest, which is in its 75th year, and Stay Golden, a brand-new business on the first floor.

Gunther, previously the merchandise manager for both businesses, and Feinstein, the former owner of GoBerry in Northampton and Amherst, purchased the stores in mid-April from Rich Madowitz, who is also a co-owner of Thornes. Gunther and Feinstein are both natives of Hampshire County.

Feinstein closed his Amherst shop early in the pandemic, and the GoBerry in Northampton closed in January 2022. He has been doing pandemic-related financial consulting in the region and had been actively looking for his next challenge when Madowitz connected the two new co-owners late last year because he thought their skillsets were a great fit for joint ownership.

“We’re excited to move forward and be able to involve our staff in the transition,” said Gunther.

Feinstein said, “I’m pleased to step into businesses that are already doing awesome work and see what our energy can bring to them to make them do more.”

Gunther has been with Cedar Chest for 13 years. Feinstein came into the mix in early December 2022 in a consultant role.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in fashion merchandising and retailing from Framingham State University and an MBA from Southern New Hampshire University. He earned a bachelor’s in fine arts from Connecticut College and has worked in finance and IT in Boston.

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Cedar Chest, a longtime eclectic gift store, carries everything from home décor to stationery, loungewear, bath and body products, and holiday items. Its new sister store, Stay Golden, which opened in October 2022, offers primarily casual and business clothing for women along with jewelry and other accessories.

About 30 associates work at the shops, with a half dozen dedicated to Stay Golden.

Gunther and Feinstein said they do not have plans to make changes to merchandise in the stores, but they will be looking at creating efficiencies that will allow them to make their staff team stronger.

“I love to find efficiencies and document and implement systems,” said Feinstein, who grew up in Northampton and Easthampton. “I’ve been on board for five months now and have a new scheduling system, email platform and digital invoicing system in place. Finding tools that work across departments and help people collaborate is what I bring to the table.”

Gunther’s expertise is in merchandizing. She grew up in Williamsburg and shopped in downtown stores as a young person, later working at Faces for a time as well. “It’s interesting to be among those helping two of these shops to evolve,” she said. “It’s unique to have two entrepreneurs of similar age who grew up in the area and are now really involved in downtown and Thornes. That’s fun and unique.”

To learn more about Thornes Marketplace, visit thornesmarketplace.com.

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Thornes Marketplace has been the cornerstone of downtown Northampton and at the center of the Main Street shopping district for more than a century. Built in 1873, it holds 55,000 square feet of space for merchants and includes features like pressed tin ceilings and hardwood floors.