

# Shanna Saunders 'retails' it like it is

Shanna Saunders doesn't do anything without passion and commitment, especially when it comes to her customers and the products she offers.

Saunders started her business 28 years ago. With an entrepreneurial spirit, Saunders has always paid attention to what people are drawn to and took notice of this at a birthday party she threw for her sons.

"We set up stations in the backyard and one was sand art," Saunders said. "We hit the road two weeks later doing trade shows."

Then, it transformed into t-shirts and Saunders started hosting t-shirt parties.

"We picked up t-shirts and started doing home shows," Saunders said. "I rented this building [on Austin Street] because I needed my house back, it was full of t-shirts."

She said from there, she added purses and jewelry, and her husband, Terry, took up wood crafting. They were trying to think of a name for their business and since it was just their stuff, they called it "Our Stuff."

Eventually, Saunders added one tanning bed to her business as well, which turned out to be a hit.

**Bottom: Shanna Saunders and Terry Saunders have been working side by side in the retail business for 28 years.**

"We were busy, people would line up waiting to get in that one bed, now we have eight," Saunders said.

Saunders said she decided to go into business for herself after working for other people all her life.

"I'm good at sales, I'm good with people," Saunders said. "After working for other people, owning my own business seemed better."

She said owning a business is a lot of work and she dubs herself a workaholic.

"We work hard, I'm a workaholic," Saunders said.

Prior to opening her store though, Saunders said her main forte was trade shows. She and her husband still travel to some trade shows, but significantly less than they did when they first started out.

"We did every little show we could find," Saunders said. "We're down to five, but we used to do more than 50. Sometimes Terry would go one way and I'd go another way. It was tough, I'll probably be crippled in my old age by how much stuff we have lifted, carried, set up and torn down."







The advantage of doing the trade shows, Saunders said, is recruiting new customers.

“Being at the trade shows, them seeing us, definitely has recruited a lot of people,” Saunders said.

Still, Saunders first love is always the people who she encounters through her business and the reason the couple still travel to some trade shows is simply for the people.

“We really go because of the people,” Saunders said.

Through the years Saunders’ business has evolved many times, from sand art at fairs and trade shows, to t-shirt parties, to a boutique and tanning, and again in recent years with the addition of furniture.

Saunders said when she and Terry were building their new house, they went to Lubbock to purchase brand new furniture for their home. However, they didn’t like what they saw on the showroom floors—not the furniture, but the attitude of the sales people.

“I had a purse full of cash and nobody gave us the time of day,” Saunders said. “They acted like we didn’t have the money to afford what we wanted.”

She said from Lubbock they ended up in San Angelo and met a vendor who introduced them to some of the best vendors in the world.

“He and his wife were wanting to get into the clothes business and we wanted to get into the furniture business,” Saunders said. “So, we helped them and they helped us.”

She said her experience buying furniture in Lubbock spurred her desire to offer quality and affordable products, along with top of the line service, here in Levelland.

“We wanted to sell furniture and we wanted to treat people the way we wanted to be treated, and offer people a product that was quality and affordable,” Saunders said.

Saunders said her perspective in selling furniture is finding out what the customer wants and figuring out whatever it takes to provide that for the customer.

“The whole thing is listening to the customers,” Saunders said. “That’s why we have customers all over the world.”

Saunders said the reason why she is successful in her business is because of her investment in people and her passion for people.

“My passion is with the people,” Saunders said. “They came in here for a reason, what are they looking for, what can I do to get you what you want?”

“It’s about building a personal relationship with the customers,” Saunders continued. “That’s the way I was raised, you invest in people by giving them your time.”

Saunders and her husband do all the deliveries for their furniture, adding another personal touch to what they offer. They have even made a delivery to Canada.



“We travel all over, and after we get to see the furniture in their homes,” Saunders said. “I always bring a bottle of West Texas wine with us, that’s our gift to them.”

During the pandemic, Saunders said she and her husband hired a company to do their deliveries as Terry has a compromised immune system after having cancer and a transplant.

“It’s hard, we have to trust someone is out there representing our business,” Saunders said. “But, we still ship that bottle of wine with their warranty papers and back it up with a phone call.”

Saunders said she and her husband are a team in their business and couldn’t do it without each other. When they first chose to pursue Our Stuff full-time, Terry chose to leave his career in construction.

“We knew one of us needed to grow,” Saunders said. “We were doing this for us to work together.”

When Terry was diagnosed with cancer, Saunders

said they knew they had made the right decision with Our Stuff as it gave them the flexibility to care for Terry the way he needed.

“God knew what he was doing,” Saunders said.

“When Terry got cancer, being in this business allowed us to take care of Terry the way he needed to be taken care of and still maintain our business.”

Along with that, Saunders said she owes it to her team of employees who have always been treated as family more so than just employees.

“I had good help that took over and ran it like it was their own,” Saunders said. “They become part of our family, that’s why we’re picky. We are in this business more than we are in our home. I wouldn’t ever ask them to do something we wouldn’t do.”

When they learned Terry had a transplant available, again Saunders said her team pulled together and took care of her business while they were out.

“When we boarded AeroCare to get the transplant, not knowing when we would be back, we knew we had a team here that was going to take care of Our Stuff,” Saunders said. “The show went on and they did an amazing job.”

Saunders said she started her business in Levelland and has kept it in Levelland because it is her home.

“Levelland is home, it’s all I know,” Saunders said. “It just felt right.”

However, now, Saunders said the majority of her customers are from out of town and come to Levelland to shop at Our Stuff.

“Eighty percent of my clientele, now, is not local,” Saunders said. “I love my local people and I appreciate my local people, but I don’t think people realize how many people come to Levelland to see Our Stuff and end up spending money at other places in town.”

She says now, her business has gotten to the point where it needs to expand—space wise—to accommodate her customers, despite already having expanded from her original store into the store next door, and the warehouse on the corner of Austin Street and Avenue G.

“We have outgrown everything here,” Saunders said. “We need something bigger, we need a bigger building, we need more parking.”

However, Saunders said she still feels at home in Levelland and doesn’t want to leave.

“I don’t want anyone to ever think we have outgrown them, we are grateful, we love our city and are thankful for the people who helped us get to where we are,” Saunders said. “The best is yet to come.”

She hopes as the business progresses into the future that she and Terry can slow down a bit and spend more time in Levelland and at their store.

“I think for our future, Terry and I would like to stay home and work in the store more,” Saunders said. “But, would we be happy? I don’t know, we sure enjoy that fast pace and going to the shows.”

**Bottom: Shanna Saunders flips through material swatches for furniture. Anytime a customer cannot find what they’re looking for on the show room floor, Shanna is happy to figure out what they’re looking for and make it available.**

