

BUSINESS



Photograph by Daniel Sato

Mahesh Nihalani (left) and David Stickles, shop goldsmith, recently moved their jewelry businesses out of their homes and into their new Jewels in Style shop in Sunnyvale.

Gem shop shifting from watches to custom jewels

By JASON GOLDMAN-HALL

Just because Mahesh Nihalani has moved his jewelry business out of his home and into a S. Pastoria Avenue location doesn't mean he can't still treat his customers like friends.

On Dec. 1, Nihalani and his business partner, David Stickles, opened Jewels in Style to the public in hopes of bringing old-fashioned custom-designed jewelry to the South Bay. The partners took over the space once occupied by Frank's Watch and Jewelry Repair on Sept. 26, because owner Frank Moesh was looking to retire but wanted the new owners to maintain the services he provided.

Nihalani said Moesh still comes in up to three times a week to help with watch repairs.

Nihalani—a member of the Cupertino Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors as well as the vice president of the Cupertino Senior Center and a housing commissioner—said he chose the Sunnyvale location because it had an established client base and fit the size and lease price he was looking for.

Now that he is a part of the Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce—and less than a block from city hall—he hopes to get involved in Sunnyvale as he has in Cupertino.

He had run a jewelry business out of his home in Cupertino, inviting customers in and making house calls.

One of his customers, Menlo Park resident Dolly Srivastava, bought a set of earrings to celebrate the birth of her children while Nihalani was still working out of his home. On Jan. 2, Srivastava was in Nihalani's new store to get some jewelry—bought in India from a master jeweler—repaired.

"He's very committed to his work; the quality is excellent, and he's very helpful," she said. "I'm pleased for him, and I wish him much success."

While the store has always repaired jewelry and watches, the primary focus has shifted from watch repair to custom jewelry. There are more than 250 pieces of jewelry on display, including Indian designs—influenced by Nihalani's homeland—and some with classic Victorian styles.

Nihalani, who became interested in jewelry when he worked at a jewelry store in the U. S. Virgin islands in 1994, said he finds Victorian jewelry the most fascinating.

"I feel that the jewelry from that time had character to it because there weren't that many jewelers, so each piece was unique and handcrafted," he said.

That uniqueness and care is what he and Stickles want to bring to Sunnyvale.

"We want to be the town jewelers and serve any needs people might have," Stickles said.

Stickles is a master goldsmith with a degree from Gem City College in Illinois. Like Nihalani, he worked out of his home and with other local jewelers.

"The problem with that is you don't get to meet people," Stickles said, "and I like people."

So now, Stickles and Nihalani get to meet each of their customers face-to-face and help them craft the perfect ring for any occasion, or the perfect piece to complete a matching set.

Nihalani and Stickles said they are happy with the small store because it gives them the exposure they couldn't get while running home businesses but allows them to keep their autonomy.

"When I was working out of my own house, I was on my own time, and thankfully, since this is our own business, we can still make our own hours," Nihalani said.

Jewels in Style is located at 505 S. Pastoria Avenue, directly behind the Jack in the Box off W. El Camino Real. For more information, call 408.616.0011.