



More to Diane's Lingerie than meets the eye

www.dianeslingerie.com

Think of the beautiful and iconic Diane's Lingerie shop on South Granville and safety in the workplace is (hopefully) the last thing that pops to mind.

It's more likely that your attention will turn to silky romantic fantasies where you find yourself adorned in the perfect undergarments; those that support, enhance

and minimize curves or provide a well-placed nip and tuck to put the spark back in or just help present the best you possible. Think beautiful, quality merchandise and a special retail experience to remind harried mothers, corporate execs and 'Sex in the City' singles that romance still makes the world go 'round, and shows breast cancer survivors that they haven't lost their beauty.

In 2008, along with 12 staff, Thomson celebrated the store's 25th anniversary and is thrilled that three generations of one family showed up to help celebrate. "Some people have been shopping here for 25 years," she said, adding that "it's more typical for consumers to shop at the same retail location for a maximum of five years before moving on."

And, if you think there are no safety issues and that everything is "light and fluffy," you'd be wrong, she says. "We have a lot of stock and we're continually going up and down ladders to access it." They have about 7 ladders in the store with between two to three steps and a six foot ladder in the back. As a result, store policy is that all staff must wear closed-heel shoes to reduce the chance of slipping. The ladders must be positioned properly, not up against the wall but all four legs properly placed, she says. "You don't just grab a chair and jump on it."

There's a lot of inventory. A lot of bras these days are molded bras and must be stored carefully in a box. They have to go up the ladder to see boxes and find the appropriate sizes for the customers. "Sometimes they have to pick up a torso or a bust form and it's important to do that the right way so as not to twist their backs."

Nobody in the store ever works alone. There is always at least three staff on at one time and they've experienced no problems in spite of their central location.

There is a special lock for safety that goes on the front door at night and is removed in the morning. The back door has an additional steel gate for evening security but remains locked during the day, when the door is open to allow for air circulation.

In 25 years, the biggest change to the business, she says, is that “we are fitting a large range of sizes from 34B to 30F to 42D. In spite of the range of breast sizes, women still think they can go to a department store and pick a bra off the rack, and it’s going to fit. They need a specialty store, like Diane’s Lingerie, where a bra fitting expert can help them choose the right size and style. Once they’ve been fitted properly, they almost always say, ‘Oh my god, why didn’t I do this sooner.’”

Diane’s focus is on providing specific markets with the exact products and services that make women’s lives easier. Staff trained and certified in prosthetic fittings care for the special needs of after surgery patients.

Her store is Pharmacare-approved and assists a lot of breast cancer survivors. “Going through breast cancer is an emotional experience and we are sensitive to the survivors’ needs. There’s a lot of psychology involved in the job. As soon as women have recovered from surgery, we advise them to come in. They can get a breast form, their new ‘breast friend.’ We make sure a woman is wearing the breast form when she leaves the store so she can feel comfortable and confident with the new form. Good breast forms these days are weighted to the size of the breast and can even have nipples. They’re lightweight and if you give someone a hug when you’re wearing one they can’t even tell,” she said.

Diane’s strong commitment to the BC/Yukon chapter of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation was a natural for her. Her generous involvement there has earned her the designation “Best Friend of the Foundation” but it’s just one more way to promote the well-being of the community that she knows best.

And, it’s that type of dedication and service that continues the store’s 27 year lingerie legacy.



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