

Business



June and Patrick Schiada own and operate PJ's Party Supply at Stonehill Shopping Center off Interstate 35 and Loop 288.

DRC/Barron Ludlum

Setting the celebratory tone

PJ's specializes in party themes

INSIDE BUSINESS

Party store sets celebratory tone

Page 1D



By Karina Ramirez
Staff Writer

Inspired by the fact that she could not find a party supply store in the phone book for her daughter's birthday party, June Schiada decided to start her own.

PJ's Party Supply, named after herself and her husband, Patrick, stores many items that are available for customers who want to throw a good party or get-together in Denton. Inside the 6,000-square-foot shop in the Stonehill Shopping Center off Interstate 35 customers can find everything from luau paper plates to Halloween costumes and even

casino night-themed items.

With 20 years of experience, California-born Schiada has always loved the party business. She grew up surrounded by Hollywood stars, like William Shatner and Mickey Rooney, and loved to see the production work behind the scenes of the *Sonny and Cher Show* and *The Carol Burnett Show*. She credits her dad, John Triana, with having introduced her to the party business. In the '80s, she helped him with his own party rental location in San Francisco. They would build props for parties with college students who dreamed of working

for the Hollywood studios.

"The kids came right out of college and, for them, it was like a dream come true," Schiada said.

Years later, in 2000, when Schiada moved to be close to her family in Corinth, she thought that she, too, could have her own business, but this time focus on the retail side. She rented a small space in downtown Sanger and from there moved twice, going from a 2,000-square-foot space to a 3,400-square-foot space in Denton in 2004.

See PJ'S on 3D

From Page 1D

PJ's

She quickly outgrew the space, expanding it to its current size, filled with balloons, paper supplies and themed arrangements for almost any occasion.

The heart of the store has slowly become the themed items.

"I focus more on theme parties and try to fill my store with those items," she said.

PJ's carries about 200 themes that are available throughout the year, like zoo, safari and knights of honor themes for boys, and ballet dancer, *Dora the Explorer* and princess celebration themes for girls. The most popular items are any of the nine western themes, like the rodeo cowboy, western roundup and two-step themes. There are also themes for every time of year, like casino, Hollywood and luau. Coming soon, PJ's will offer the popular *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana* themes.

Amanda Rowan, a longtime customer since the days in Sanger and a loyal fan, said that there is nothing a person can't find at PJ's.

"If she does not have something, she will help you find it," Rowan said. "That type of customer service is not found anywhere."

In addition, Rowan said that as long as Schiada is there, she would continue to shop there.

Because she is not a party planner, Schiada provides other services for her customers, such as brochures on how people can throw their own parties. For the western theme, for example, Schiada provides activity ideas and suggestions on how to set it up, including menus.

"It is helpful because, a lot of times, people can't visualize their event," Schiada said.

Jeanice Newton, a stay-at-home mom and volunteer in Sanger, appreciates the attention to detail.

When it came time for her son Zack's 8th birthday in 2003, she found a military theme that made the party special.

"I was so impressed with the store," Newton said about the variety of items available, including an army tank foldout centerpiece, plastic helmets and dog tags.

Newton visited the first store in Sanger and said she has used several of PJ's themes throughout the years. She has found items to decorate during her many baby showers, church banquets and birthday parties.

"It is more than a place for paper plates and cups," she said.

Inside the store, customers can also find a referral center with about 38 business cards and

brochures of other professionals who provide services like party accessory rentals, magicians,

Quinceañera planners and even calligraphy experts.

Before PJ's, Schiada worked for the Denton school district, handled a catering business and worked other jobs while raising her daughter Shauna, a sophomore at Sanger High School. Both her daughter and husband work at the store part-time and help her run the busy party store.

Referring to herself as the brain of the business, Schiada admits to getting up early and working long hours. She has less time than before to be around the community and her family. But, somehow, she manages to make dinner for her family at 8:30 p.m. as often as she can.

"I pray I am a good role model," she said. "It is a hard balancing act to try to do things."

With a staff of five people, Schiada has built a friendly environment. One of her employees, Tinah Board, mother of a 3-year-old child, likes the flexibility she gets at PJ's because she can work and still pick up her child at school on time.

"I let her know what is going on," Board said. "She is willing to help me in any way whatsoever."

"I focus more on theme parties and try to fill my store with those items."

June Schiada,
PJ's Party Supply owner

Schiada said that understanding what her employees need allows her to run her business better. After all, she started it so she could not only have fun, but also be able to be around for her family.

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