

Madison Magazine...September 2006

Your Town: Window Shopping with Shayna Miller

Baby Bliss:

Happy Bambino Pampers Parent and Baby Alike

Everything from the "Parking for New Mothers" sign in the parking lot to the cute mom-and-baby-elephant logo tells you that Happy Bambino, a pregnancy and early parenting center, is all about mom and baby. This year-and-a-half old Atwood shop has enjoyed so much success already that the owners have been asked by customers when they'll open a second location and if they'll franchise in the future.

Cofounders and mothers Alison Dodge, twenty-nine, and Lea Wolf, twenty-seven, aren't ready for that--yet. After all, they're too busy selling baby and kids' merchandise, handling the store's 'Eco-Boutique' (which collects and sells carefully selected and gently used children's and maternity clothing and other baby goods), and juggling the parent resource center. Plus, they'll launch their online gift registry in the upcoming months.

The savvy businesswomen (Wolf has a background in educational policy and is working on her master's; Dodge worked in HR for the UW Medical School) were introduced in March 2004 when a friend realized that both women had a similar vision of a combination retail/early pregnancy resource center. The two friends immediately set to work doing extensive market research and merging their visions.

"When we opened, we wanted to be somewhere where people really supported local business," explains Wolf. "We found that east siders were more interested in the products here, and west siders were more willing to drive to get here. So here we are."

Recently, Happy Bambino faced two minor setbacks: floods in May and July. The store's customers and Eco-Friendly Flooring immediately pitched in to help out with labor and fundraisers--even a benefit concert. Happily, the store is back on its feet.

Looks like bringing up baby is a lot easier for parents with this shop on the scene--and your bambino will agree.

- Shayna Miller is assistant and style editor for Madison Magazine.

Picture Captions:

Tyke Time: Happy Bambino sells pint-sized pieces to keep little ones looking their best. Rain gear, \$18.50-\$28. Kidorable; leather watermelon shoes, \$27, Robeez; owners Wolf (left, with daughter Ma'iingan) and Dodge (with son Liam); Kecci MommyBag totes, \$36.

Price Range: \$.33-\$300

Owners' Picks: Kangaroo Korner fleece pouch, \$67; Glamourmom nursing tank, \$39; Arm's Reach co-sleepers, \$170-\$200.

Verdict: Parents will feel right at home at this cozy, community-oriented boutique. And because Wolf and Dodge carry merchandise they've tried, they're a wealth of information on what to buy and use.

Address: Happy Bambino, 2045 Atwood Ave., 204-6147

www.happybambino.com