



Andrea Bragg laughs with her team at the storefront in the Shops at Sea Pines Center.

Dreams do come true. After all, three times a year, Andrea Bragg jets off to New York and Las Vegas to shop (you are invited to pause to let that sink in, if only to contemplate the possibilities). Now, if the story stopped there, life would be as carefree as cocktails on a breezy veranda overlooking the Calibogue Sound for the owner of Hilton Head Island's Forsythe Jewelers. In reality, Bragg flies to the big cities on buying trips for her iconic, fine jewelry shop, taking along one of

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her retail team members, her marketing alter ego, Katelin Chapman, and a heavy binder filled with strategic plans, charts, and reports, to help the team prepare for the next season in jewelry.

"Buying in the jewelry business used to be very different," Bragg said. "Traveling salesmen came to your store with a rolling suitcase and their rolls of jewelry. The sales person would write up the order, and off they went. Times have changed." For Forsythe Jewelers, today's approach is three-pronged: New York twice a year, and a June international show in Las Vegas.

Bragg, Chapman, and sales associate Barb Panciera returned from this year's September buying excursion, having worked very hard, seeking out just the right lines and pieces to fill the seafoam-lined cases of their shop next spring. Not allowing any grass to grow under idle feet, the team flew into New York on a Friday. "We scheduled our flight so

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Andrea and Barb make buying decisions during their appointment at John Hardy headquarters in New York



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The Forsythe team meeting at the New York offices of LAGOS



Fitting in a little fun during a trip to New York

we could go straight to our David Yurman appointment,” Bragg said. “We checked in at our hotel, dropped our bags off, put our cute shoes on, and ran over to David Yurman’s office. Then we met with John Hardy and Lagos that Monday.”

The preparation imbued in these buying trips is a big part of why Forsythe Jewelers is celebrating 36 years of successfully serving locals and visitors from their sparkling, Sea Pines Center shop. “I have an admin team that puts together reports for me that show what my sweet spot is for each designer—what percentage of sales are in a certain price range; do we sell more bracelets, necklaces, earrings?” Bragg said.

After all the data has been studied and absorbed, it is the long-standing commitment to her customers, that drives the final buying decisions. “Andrea has to be thoughtful about each piece” Chapman said. “She is trying to represent all the different facets that make up a Forsythe woman. She is very thoughtful and precise. A lot of brain power goes into the process.”

“I always have to think of at least one person I can sell that piece to before I buy it,” Bragg said.

With 52 percent of her customers coming from outside the Lowcountry, a significant component of her effective approach is keeping on-trend. “A lot of our locals travel,” Bragg said. “A lot of our locals have homes somewhere else. They travel abroad, they travel across the states, and they want to be up-to-date. We need to know what’s hot, what’s the Pantone color of the year, what everybody’s showing, what everybody’s wearing.”

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As much as these trips are very much about business and numbers and inventory, it’s not entirely without amusing diversions. “We do occasionally take in a show. We try to take advantage of seeing the city.” And then back to business of course. “I like to check out what the big stores have—what Saks is carrying, what Neiman Marcus is carrying. I like to go to Tiffany to see what they are showing and how it’s merchandised. I like to see their sales techniques, how we are greeted, how we are taken care of. And we always go by MacKenzie-Childs on 57th.”

The designer-based collection found in Forsythe’s welcoming showroom includes the aforementioned always-thrilling collections from David Yurman; Lagos and their Caviar Collection; Bali-based, organically-designed John Hardy; and whimsical MacKenzie-Childs gifts whose ornament tree decks the showroom throughout the holidays; along with Marco Bicego; Gurhan; the Naledi Collection; and the elegant designs of Roberto Coin, whose display cases line the windows of the shop, and become sparkling, inspiring gift boxes during the holidays. Be sure to ask a Forsythe sales associates about Roberto Coin’s ruby signature—a special little secret worth sharing and giving.

The thoughtfully gathered, relaxed luxury of the jewelry and gifts found at Forsythe Jewelers is the result of Bragg’s commitment to building relationships with her customers and her team. “We put a lot of thought, energy, and love into what we put



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Forsythe Jewelers is pleased to be hosting their third annual Fashion and Philanthropy event benefitting Volunteers in Medicine. Exquisite jewelry, with special pieces brought in just for the occasion, will be served alongside drinks and hors d’oeuvres on Thursday, November 16 from 5-7 p.m.

Forsythe Jewelers is in The Shops at Sea Pines Center at 71 Lighthouse Road, Hilton Head Island. For more information, please call (843) 671-7070 or visit forsythehhi.com. Forsythe Jewelers cheerfully refunds Sea Pines Resort gate pass fees.

in these showcases,” she said. “And my sales staff style their customers in a lot of different ways. I have some associates who love to layer; so, if that customer loves to layer, I have Rebecca. She’ll put a John Hardy bracelet with a Roberto Coin bracelet, and then put on a Lagos necklace, and it looks fabulous. Then I have some sales associates that are little bit more tailored. We have a little bit of everything here.”

Following a career in human resources, Bragg worked in the shop for 16 years, and purchased Forsythe Jewelers in 2015. “The biggest surprise has been how much energy Forsythe gives me,” she said. “It’s

a lot of hard work, but it’s the challenge of something new every day; that’s what inspires me.”

It’s all about family for Bragg, whether it’s her family of customers, her team at Forsythe, or her own family. Daughters Abbey, 22, a senior at Winthrop University, and Julia, 19, a sophomore at Clemson, work in the store whenever they are available, and husband, Ray Bragg, head golf professional at Sea Pines Country Club, steps in as bartender for fundraisers and special events.

Sometimes, dreams really do come true. 2



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