DECOR & more

Pine + Quill weathered lockdown and has since become a staple for home goods with an artistic touch

story **KATE CHADWICK**
photos **ERIK WEBER**



Dianna DeStefano in her store, Pine + Quill, which opened in November 2020 at 23 N Walnut St.

Sometimes you have to get out of Dodge for inspiring ideas before bringing them home to implement. For Dianna DeStefano and her former partner, Richard McFarland, it was a road trip out West during the pandemic that prompted the inspiration behind Pine + Quill, Dianna's charming home décor and gift shop on North Walnut. "The pandemic was in full swing, and we thought we would open after it. But things wound up moving swiftly—which was great! We didn't run into too many issues with the pandemic because we were all pretty used to living within the protective measures, and we knew it could be done safely and stay within the CDC guidelines when we opened."

Dianna was already the owner of The Paperly Studio, an online business for her calligraphy and hand lettering for wedding invitations and special events. Before Richard left to pursue other projects, the original plan was to merge his photography and her calligraphy. But they outgrew that plan as soon as the present space was found after an exhaustive search, including locales in Oxford and Kennett Square. In the end, the present space won out not just because of the physical building, but the town. "I spent a lot of time in West Chester 20+ years ago, and it's grown so much over time and in such a good way. It's a special town where you want to raise your family, with a diverse demographic and good school district."

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

"To be honest, I wasn't sure I wanted a retail store until I was in the thick of it: planning, merchandising, and setting up."

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

Ironically, Dianna never envisioned a brick-and mortar location. "To be honest, I wasn't sure I wanted a retail store until I was in the thick of it: planning, merchandising, and setting up," Dianna told us. "Then I fell in love with it and can't imagine it any other way. My love for this store and the process came as a surprise to me. I never felt so energized by work and truthfully, it doesn't feel like work to me. It's so much more than just a store. It's connecting with and being part of a community. If I knew I would love this path as much as I do, I would have certainly started building this business sooner."

Once the deal was sealed, the pair rushed to open by Black Friday 2020. "It was a crazy six weeks, but thankfully we didn't have a lot of renovations to do," Dianna said. "We only had to paint, purchase, and merchandise. Of course, sales could have and would have been better if we weren't in a pandemic."

Jumping in feet first came with its own learning curve. "As someone who is starting out, every aspect of this is new to me, except the intuition of how to execute the creative side of the store," Dianna said. "I'm learning as I go, which







certainly means I hit some bumps and surprises along the way! I learned how important contracts are when starting a business. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement, the day to day management and all the constant changes, but you can forget some important foundational processes that are in place to protect you. I've learned how to hone in and stick to my business model. Sometimes I have to say no to people, which is hard for me, but necessary. I also learned that West Chester is full of resources and the community is all about supporting each other. I made instant friends with other businesses in town, and I'm forever grateful."

What she has now is a space that feels both wide open and cozy, a showcase for local artists and artisans, with a focus on women-owned vendors. "I wanted a store that offered many different things, at many different price points, and something for everyone," Dianna said. "Men love the store, young college kids can find gifts, young professionals can find furniture for their home. I also wanted to offer a lot of locally sourced products. And if it's not local, I try to offer a variety of U.S. made, not on Amazon, small-batch products."

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

"I also learned that West Chester is full of resources and the community is all about supporting each other. I made instant friends with other businesses in town, and I'm forever grateful."

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

Pine + Quill's best sellers are the laser wood cut art from local woman-owned business Sunshine Letter Co, along with candles and books. "I currently have about 10 local artisans, and I also offer seasonal home decor, furniture, hand-picked antiques, handmade jewelry, organic skincare and travel maps. I think these items sell so well because they are different, and you can't find them anywhere else," Dianna told us. "I want this store to be a place where people can find something unique as a gift or for themselves."

Craft workshops are now being taught at the store, in the shop's roomy basement space. "It's perfect so that I can host large groups. These workshops can be private events, too, if someone has a group in mind. I'm open to anything, and would love to see more experiential events happen at the shop. So if someone is crafty or knows someone who is, they're welcome to host a workshop at Pine + Quill. Hence....arrive...linger...experience...in the logo!"

It was a challenge, but in the end, she's thrilled with the outcome. "We knew that with West Chester being a bigger town, the opportunity for success was much greater than other nearby towns. And we wanted to be part of a borough and not a shopping center."

Pine + Quill is open Tuesdays 10am-5pm, Wednesday through Saturday 10-6, Sundays 10-5. Closed Mondays. On Instagram at pineandquillshop.