



Our annual look at a few seasoned entrepreneurs and professionals who represent the leading roles women are taking in the greater Wilmington community

Photos by KELLY STARBUCK PHOTOGRAPHY

Intro photo for illustration by CECE BOYKIN

Big Sky Design, Inc.

910-793-3992 • bigskydesignonline.com

L-R: Vanessa Bricker, Raleigh Wilkins, Ayla Schares, Jennifer Kraner (owner), Jo Howell, Lauren Brown, Kirsten Cummings



Our Business: Commercial and residential interior design.

What's The One Question People Should Ask You, But Usually Don't?: Do each of the designers at Big Sky design toward their own style? No—while we each have our own personal taste, each project is geared towards our client's ideas for their project.

You'd Never Guess That: Big Sky is celebrating 20 years! We have been a thread in our community and are happy to have created memorable interior spaces in the City of Wilmington's Civic Buildings and Police Headquarters, New Hanover County Libraries (this photo) and Courthouses, NC Aquariums, medical and dental practices, restaurants, professional offices, and many residences throughout our region!

The Secret to Good Business Is: Enjoying each day and the people we work with, and our clients we have the honor to work with. Ideas are the catalyst we build on when completing interior spaces and we hope they are inspirational and uplifting in the end.

Our Business: Uptown Market is a unique venue featuring a multitude of furniture styles, which include repurposed, artisan, industrial, primitive and custom pieces. We also offer a large assortment of clothing and accessories, jewelry, locally made products and a gourmet shop. Our newest location accepts distinguished consignment items.

Who We Serve: We serve a wide range of customers from local neighborhoods, to beach homeowners and tourists.

Our Mission Is To: Inspire creativity and give our customers the confidence to make choices that are outside the box, but reflect their personal style.

Why We Chose This Career: We chose this career because we love being part of a team, working for a home design store that is on the cutting edge of today's designs.

Why We Love Doing Business in Wilmington: We feel passionate about our hometown and love the diversity of ages and backgrounds that has provided us with such wonderful customers to work with.



Uptown Market

910-686-0930 • uptown-market.com

L-R: (top) Melanie Bowe, Jane Kopecky, Ginny Thompson;
(bottom) Rhonda Bellet, Jo Ann Latshaw, Sophia West



Rosalyn George, MD, FAAD

Wilmington Dermatology Center
910-256-4350
wilmingtondermatologycenter.com

My Business: At Wilmington Dermatology Center, we have a staff of over 30 passionate individuals focused on ensuring our patients receive the best care for their skin. We offer medical dermatology care for patients of all ages, the latest cosmetic treatments with a focus on natural results, aesthetic services for skincare maintenance, and clinical research allowing us to participate in the future of new treatment development.

What's The One Question People

Should Ask You, But Usually Don't?: What is the proper way to apply sunscreen and how much should I be using? I see so many people using sunscreen improperly, resulting in sunburns and an increased risk of skin cancer.

I've Learned The Hard Way: Having a balanced life means that you sometimes have to give up the idea of perfection. I think women in general, especially with the huge influence of social media, have unrealistic

expectations of what they should be able to accomplish on a daily basis.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: We love doing business in Wilmington because our clients have such a diverse background – they all have such a different story to tell. We also love the ability to live and work in such a tight-knit business community, where we can work together to help one another provide the best for our clients.



Michelle Clark

Intracoastal Realty

910-367-9767

michelleclarkteam.com

My Business: The Michelle Clark Real Estate Team is comprised of 7 agents, who assist with buying and selling real estate in the Greater Wilmington area.

My Mission Is To: Continue to build our reputation on satisfied customers and successful transactions, while serving our community. Each member of the Michelle Clark Team donates their time, talent and takes an active role in improving our community.

Why I Chose This Career: I have a passion for helping others. Buying and selling a home is one of the biggest financial decisions people make, and it can be very emotional. We genuinely care about our clients, and always have their best interests at heart.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: It's a small town, with so much to do. From boating to UNCW to Historic Downtown, pristine Wrightsville Beach, incredible restaurants, the new Fine Arts Center and everything in between. Wilmington residents are some of the most generous people I know, and I'll be proud to call Wilmington home for many years.



Julie Bell

Honeybee Fashion

910-319-7693 • shopthebee.com

My Business: Fashion and gifts, a fun mix of things that really blur the line between want and need.

You'd Never Guess That: I secretly hope that argyle socks will eventually become the hot new fashion trend. They're like comfort food for your feet.

My Mission Is To: At work my mission is to try to make a match between what people are looking for and fun stuff we bring into the store. In life in general, it's to taste-test every dark salted caramel on the planet and definitively know which one is the best.

The Secret to Good Business Is: The secret is that there is no secret. It's not poetic, but working hard and having goals. My dad worked two jobs and my mother worked any extra shifts she could to give us a great life. It ends up that those people I thought were awful as a teenager, were right about almost everything. Except for not getting me those legwarmers in the seventh grade... I'm still upset.



Arti Bhandari Mehta

Artée Fabrics & Home

910-686-2950 • arteefabricsandhome.com

My Business: Selling home decor fabrics, custom furniture, accessories and trims to make your house a home.

What's The One Question People Should Ask You, But Usually Don't?: What services do you offer besides selling fabrics. We offer full service, custom workrooms to serve all your needs.

You'd Never Guess That: We are also a fabric manufacturer, so our selections vary

greatly. Just because you do not see it in our stores, does not mean it is not available.

Who I Serve: We strive to have products for every budget. We offer closeouts at incredible prices as well as the highest end brands.

My Mission Is To: Be your one stop shop for all your fabric needs. We provide customers with quality high end textiles as well as fabrics at a price point

affordable by all.

Why I Chose This Career: Being a textile manufacturer, it was a natural fit to open retail stores and provide customers direct access to our extensive line, without the high prices of high-end designers.

The Secret to Good Business Is: Offering your goods at prices that are affordable to all and developing long lasting relationships with your clientele.

Alycia R. James

elle

910-839-3033 • elleclothing.com

My Business: Modern clothing, shoes and accessories for the fashion forward woman. Our unique selections offer high quality and value, without traveling to a large city. We also offer a full online shopping experience, which our busy professionals love!

My Mission Is To: Provide customized service to women looking to express their personal style. Elle celebrates the diversity and individuality of women, and we encourage our clients to embrace what makes them unique.

Why I Chose This Career: After almost 20 years as a Healthcare Consultant, I wanted to open a store offering “desk to dinner” attire that reflects equal parts sophistication and fun.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: The extensive philanthropy in this community is amazing. We support a number of non-profit organizations in the area and enjoy our relationships with them. We also appreciate the collegial nature of local women in business and find great value in our monthly breakfast with other boutique owners.



LeeAnn Tluchowski

Shuckin' Shack Oyster Bar

910-833-8622, 910-458-7380

theshuckinshack.com

My Business: We are a small oyster bar specializing in fresh seafood and tasty cocktails, with two corporate stores and franchises in 5 states.

Who I Serve: We serve ourselves, our community and our environment. At Shuckin' Shack, we take a lot of pride in serving others and we want to continue to do so for a long time. That is why we focus on a sustainable future by reducing negative environmental impacts.

Why I Chose This Career: The restaurant industry chose me. I started out working in restaurants and ended up following a different career path for a while. Something always brought me back though. The restaurant has provided me a lot of opportunity and happiness.

I've Learned The Hard Way: Work smarter not harder! I use to dislike this quote, but if you really think about it, no matter how hard you work, you're not going anywhere unless you work smart. Most of the time, that means surrounding yourself with people smarter than yourself.





Jennifer Young

Nest Realty
910-547-2106
nestrealty.com

My Business: Is built on referrals, but even if you were a call out of the blue, I treat all my clients with the same respect and dedication. I want to make sure all my clients are 100% happy, with one of the most important financial decisions they can make. I'm all about making the process of buying or selling real estate a happy, fun and exhilarating experience worth sharing.

Who I Serve: Buyers and sellers in the Wilmington area, including Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach, Leland & Hampstead. My niche is marketing, listing and selling new construction and resales in the Cape Fear area.

The Secret to Good Business Is: Communication and follow through. I have a very customer service oriented skill set and it comes through when doing real estate transactions and helping my clients. This is a people business, and people like to work with professionals that they can rely on to get the job done, without hesitation.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: This is my Nest, where I live, work, eat and play. I love helping people discover why Wilmington is such a great place and helping families live where they love, is what I do best.



My Business: Provides elegance with an edge in women's clothing and accessories. We're a one-of-a-kind boutique focusing on fine fabrics, artistic jewelry and distinctive bags.

What's The One Question People Should Ask You, But Usually Don't?: "Can you help me put together an outfit?" A lot of customers don't feel they know how to put looks together and that's what we really love to do at Meadowlark. That's fun and we feel we're at our best when we provide that service.

Who I Serve: Women looking for an eclectic selection of transitional pieces that can go to work, then to dinner and to lunch on the weekends. We also serve women looking for special occasion pieces and dresses.

The Secret to Good Business Is: Going with your gut, trusting yourself and doing all you can to make sure your customer has a great experience.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: There's incredible girl-power in Wilmington. The well wishes and support I receive is unique.



Kendall Hurt

Meadowlark

910-679-4474 • meadowlarkshop.net



Buffy Frank

Crescent Moon Art & Style

910-762-4207

crescentmoonnc.com

My Business: Is artwork from around the globe, with a focus on local artisans and women's designer fashions.

Who I Serve: The locals and tourist with our brick and mortar store, and nationally through our website, bringing art and fashion from the artist's studio to the client's home.

My Mission Is To: Raise awareness to home grown artisans in any medium, including fashion. Also, to become the new norm in our efforts to create a sustainable hub of art and styles.

The Secret to Good Business Is: Know your market, and provide people with the best quality and great customer service.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: The people have been so inviting and I feel like I have never lived anywhere before I came here, it's HOME!

Debby Gomulka, Allied ASID

Ethan Allen

910-352-7339 • ethanallen.com

My Business: Ethan Allen is a lifestyle brand that specializes in meticulous style and quality, with customized design services that fit each client's own vision. With over 17 years of professional interior design experience, I have joined the Ethan Allen team to provide the same distinctive quality and luxury experience to sophisticated clients looking for an extraordinary quality of life.

Who I Serve: I serve clients in the Greater Wilmington area who are searching for a turn key package of professional design services—space planning, furniture design and selection, budget development and lifestyle consulting.

Why I Chose This Career: From the time I was a child, I knew that I would become a designer. The real joy in this profession is being able to improve my client's quality of life.

Why I Love Doing Business In Wilmington: This is an exciting time for Wilmington! Creating beautiful spaces that function well for the newcomers to our area is the most rewarding part of my profession.



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