

I often wonder how people end up in the professions they are in-especially when it is a non-traditional field. Hampshire Pewter is one of those stories with an interesting history behind it. Harold and Kathy Guptill, owners of Hampshire Pewter in Somersworth, do not have a background in either retail sales or manufacturing. If you step into their shop in Barclay Square or visit the website you would never know that they hadn't been crafting and selling fine pewter gifts for generations.

Kathy came from the education world and Harold was an I.T. professional. Like many people they had a desire to own their own business. Unlike most people, they took it past the desire stage and bought Hampshire Pewter in 2005. They chose the business in part because they were seeking an opportunity that included both manufacturing and retail sales.

Did I mention they had five young children when they did this?

At the time, Hampshire Pewter was located in Wolfeboro so Harold spent a lot of time running between Wolfeboro and Somersworth where they lived. Kathy remained at her job while helping out with the business whenever she could. The kids were a part of the business from the beginning as well bagging ornaments at Christmas and folding boxes to help mom and dad. Their second oldest child Isaac, now 18, continues to work at the shop when he is not busy working as a call firefighter.

A few years ago the Guptill's decided it was time to shorten the distance between the business and home. Should they move the business to Somersworth or move their family to Wolfeboro? Somersworth made the cut. "Our church is here and we love this community," said Harold. "Somersworth is our home-it just feels right," he added. After countless hours of packing and moving equipment the transition was completed and the business is humming along in its new home on Route 108.

Hampshire Pewter offers handcrafted products through their website, the shop in Somersworth and at a number of retailers in the State including the famous Zeb's Country Store in North Conway. They also offer corporate gifts and custom orders for that special occasion. Being a small business they wear many hats including sales and marketing. They learned, however, that it is sometimes a better investment to hire a professional after creating a Facebook page that wasn't bringing in the desired results. That is one of the many tough choices you make as a small business owner. Do it yourself or hire an expert? Can you afford to hire someone to do the things you don't do well? Can you afford not to?

The Guptill's goal is to grow enough to hire more talent allowing them to focus more on the business. "The question you have to ask yourself is, 'do you work in the business or on the business?' We are still at the point of working in the business," said Kathy.

If owning a business and raising five children wasn't enough, the couple is also quite engaged in the community. Both volunteer at their church, Kathy is a board member of the Chamber of Commerce and Harold is on the City's Planning Board. Perhaps that's the secret to success-the more you do the more you realize you can do.

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