

Floral and gift shop in Wood River recognized as Business of the Month

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By FRED POLLARD

WOOD RIVER - For its efforts to make the area festive, attractive and warm, Jeffrey's Flowers by Design has been recognized as the River Bend Growth Association Business of the Month for December.

"I was surprised ... shocked, actually," owner Jeff McElroy said. "The (RBGA representatives) were standing outside and I had no idea what they were doing here. It was a great surprise."

The floral and gift shop opened in 2006 and has developed a reputation not only for its elaborate arrangements and quality accessories, but for its open house celebrations as well, which always turn into annual blowouts.

"To me, this year's open house was as great as it always is," McElroy said. "The attendance was down some, which I expected due to the economy, but I was very pleased overall and everyone who came had a great time. It really gets everyone in the Christmas spirit and ready for the holiday season."

McElroy said people already are asking him when next year's open house will be.

"They just have to be patient," he said, laughing. "It takes a lot of work and preparation to put these things together."

Jeffrey's Flowers opened for business in January 2006 as the first tenant in the Boos Plaza strip mall. McElroy said the business took off right away, and he wound up expanding his shop to the unit next door in 2008, giving him 3,750 square feet of showroom and workroom space.

"I know how to buy so that I can keep my prices where they need to be," he said. "People are impressed with the shop. We have a different look about us, and I like to think we have an appearance and quality in our inventory that's a little more upscale without the upscale price."

McElroy's extensive experience includes working in Chicago and earning a horticultural degree. He spent 30 years at Dick's Flowers before deciding to open his own business in 2006. Beginning with just one other employee, McElroy now boasts a full staff and a hearty train of regular customers.

"This took off much faster than I expected," he said. "I was fully prepared to struggle for a few years if I needed to, but this has really exceeded my expectations."

"Without my employees, I am just a name on the door. They make us who we are. A lot of people think I do it all, but there is no way I could. If someone compliments my showroom, the credit goes to whoever did the showroom.

"A business takes a team to make or break that business."

Jeffrey's Flowers By Design, 322 Lakin Blvd. in Wood River, provides floral arrangement and delivery for all types of live and silk floral needs, as well as a showroom filled with collectibles including centerpieces, small furniture, mirrors and home accessories.

Every week, McElroy goes through his inventory and tags new items with a red dot, signifying a half-price special.

"Keep checking back, as we always have new items with a red dot," McElroy said.

For more information, call (618) 259-6292.

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