

Triplets expand Richland lash salon to include boutique

 tricitybusinessnews.com/2017/12/flash/

December 14, 2017



In addition to eyelash extensions, waxing and microblading, sisters offer training, online sales

Three sisters believe owning and operating a business together is triple the fun.

Meet Laura Geertsma, Leslie Miller-Stidham and Lisa Olson — identical triplets who have always worked together.

From their first teen job at Subway to working nights at a casino, to finessing their way through the same beauty school program to finally launching the successful small business, Flash Your Style, the three share a bond that makes them “not want to be apart.”

The sisters grew up in Yakima, were pregnant at the same time, and continue to share their daily lives.

“We have this bond where we can’t live without each other,” Geertsma said. “We all have 16-year-olds, we all have 8-year-olds and now two of us have babies.”

They share children on the weekends when they rotate kids’ sleepovers, and the three pick up coffees and run errands for one another.

“I like to say that one is my left side and one is my right side,” Miller-Stidham said. “We’ve always had a vibe together. Sometimes we’re all here working together, but we’re so busy that we hardly get to talk to each other. So, then I’ll ask if they want to come over for dinner.”

The decision to start a business together was a natural one. The three sisters were pregnant and working nights. Thinking of their families and the desire to be home with them in the evening, they decided to make a change.

[blockquote quote="We just stay positive and go; we don't let anything slow us down."
source="Leslie Miller-Stidham, Flash Your Style" align="right" max_width="300px"]

Olson decided to get eyelash extensions and when Miller-Stidham saw them — despite being a bit skeptical beforehand — she was an instant fan. She went and got her own.

"They made me feel beautiful," she said. The increased confidence and ease of looking "put together and less tired" in the morning spurred her to research credentials needed to provide eyelash extensions to others. She discovered a person had to be an aesthetician or cosmetologist and quickly called to inquire about classes at a beauty school. Classes were starting the following week. She talked with her sisters and the three immediately registered for the program.

They all earned their certifications and began working in other people's businesses.

"We were working for someone else at first, but we really wanted to work for ourselves," Olson said. Clients began hearing about them and business picked up in their initial location — a basement they rented from another Yakima business.

"When we first started school, I joked, 'Let's get so big that we have to move to Tri-Cities.' A few years later (in 2011), we came shopping and negotiated a price on a five-year lease near Olive Garden," Miller-Stidham said. At first, they kept their initial shop open and commuted to the Tri-Cities from Yakima.

But that was short-lived. The trio moved their families to the Tri-Cities and focused on building their clientele here. After their first five years at the Louisiana Street location, they moved to 118 Keene Road, Richland, behind the Albertsons on Leslie and Gage.

"I feel like we get a lot more traffic here; there's definitely more exposure," Miller-Stidham said.

"We like the modern space and can also have a picnic out back on the grass near the pathway," Geertsma added.

The three business owners complement one another in day-to-day operations.

Though they form a cohesive unit and can successfully operate all facets of the business, the triplets each have their individual strengths and passions.

"I love to do eyelash extensions; I'm a perfectionist and I do each individual lash. It takes a lot of practice. For a new student, it takes about four hours to finish, but I can do it in an hour to an hour and a half," Olson said.

Miller-Stidham specializes in microblading, a semi-permanent tattoo in which the technician creates fine, brush-like strokes to create a fuller, thicker eyebrow, and training, while Geertsma focuses on social media, eyelash extension classes and “does lashes all day.”

The three have managed to combine their strengths into a lucrative business in which they’ve trained about 500 cosmetologists, aestheticians and nurses in the art of microblading. They also offer popular wares at an ever-growing boutique, manage and fill Amazon orders for eyelash extensions and related products, and offer beauty-enhancing services to area residents six days a week.

The Amazon side of the business has been steadily growing.

“It’s awesome; we ship throughout the United States and to other countries. Sales have stayed steady since we began, with an average of 15 to 50 items sold each day across the globe,” Olson said.

However, because the triplets regularly forge into new territories to expand their repertoires, online sales are somewhat “old news,” they said.

Instead, two new ventures are in the forefront. The first is the expanded boutique inside Flash Your Style. It opened with jewelry about a year ago, but six months ago, the trio expanded to also offer “hand-picked items that are fun” —clothing, boots, gift items and a barrage of accessories — that “sets us apart from the mall,” Miller-Stidham said.

The second venture is an online microblade training video that Miller-Stidham spent about six months perfecting.

“It’s a step-by-step tutorial for people to download and then people buy the products that come with the kit,” she said. “People from around the world are buying it.”

The online training tool lessened the entrepreneurs’ travel schedules, a must in their busy lives. They’ve traveled to Hawaii, Idaho and other states to offer trainings, but agreed it’s hard to be away from their families — not to mention the time away from the business and expenses involved.

The online training is efficient and increases the services offered locally with the three entrepreneurs in the shop each day. They generally offer two local microblade trainings each month, as well as monthly eyelash extension trainings.

Microblading applications last up to one year, Miller-Stidham said.

“When we first started, we worried about paying the rent. Now, we can make that in one day and we can pick more for the boutique and continually invest in the business,” Miller-Stidham said.

“We aren’t rich by any means and definitely work hard,” Geertsma said. “But we love doing it.”

Many customers have become regulars, who the trio regard as “dear friends.”

“We also get new clients every week and sometimes, every day,” Olson said. “We work 24/7, but we love what we do. I wouldn’t want to do anything else. We get to dress up, chat with clients, and they’re so happy with their lashes when they leave.”

“And it’s awesome to work with family,” Geertsma said.

The entrepreneurs estimate that the business has grown by 50 percent every year since opening in the Tri-Cities.

Their immediate goal is to increase their employee base.

“Our goals are to get four or five more part-time people working here. We’d really like to add more lash specialists to our team,” Geertsma said.

The three agree that their biggest lesson learned over the years is to pay commission rather than hourly wages.

“We learned that commission is key; it gives everyone an extra push,” Olson said.

The sisters employ a full-time receptionist and four part-time workers.

They all agree that the key to success is being creative and trying new things.

“We just stay positive and go; we don’t let anything slow us down,” Miller-Stidham said.

Flash Your Style is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 509-572-2777 or visit www.flashyourstyle.net to inquire about services and to make appointments.

Sisters start charity to help families with adoption

The identical triplets and Flash Your Style owners don’t limit their philanthropic hearts to the Christmas season.

“We’re starting our new charity and are hoping to help a lot of people have children, who maybe couldn’t otherwise,” Leslie Miller-Stidham said.

She and her sisters Lisa Olson and Laura Geertsma recently created and launched Adoption CARE, a 501c3, faith-based referral service to assist adoptive families throughout the United States as they navigate the often-challenging adoption process.

“My two babies are adopted. They’re 2 now and we have extended families because of our babies. It’s wonderful,” Laura Geertsma said.

Their mission is to educate and counsel guests through every step of the adoption journey, along with offering support. The networking and advocacy forum is meant “for those who value and support adoption and to support all members of the adoption triad” with the main goal of “improving children’s and family’s overall well-being.”

People are encouraged to donate to help make adoption simpler for all parties involved.

“It costs from \$30,000 to \$60,000 to adopt through an agency,” Geertsma said. “We help people navigate the process so it hopefully only costs \$5,000 to \$10,000. The cost shouldn’t stop someone from becoming a family.”

The triplets want to give hope and assistance to families wishing to adopt. Potential adoptive parents can apply for Care Grant Assistance, the funding program that seeks to fund up to \$10,000 directly to the agency/lawyer or other entity completing the adoption. Other services are available to the adoptive family and birth parents.

“We really like to help people,” Lisa Olson said. Those interested in learning more about the charity can visit adoptioncare.org.