

# HIGH COUNTRY Boutique & Gallery

“We don’t sell fashion trends, we sell great clothing,” quips Donna Toney, owner of High Country Gallery in downtown Lewisburg. “Fashion is throw away money, good clothing creates style. We want women to feel comfortable and confident, so they can present themselves well. I see this store as my closet from which I pull elements to make a great workable wardrobe.”

Started in 1991 as a gallery of American art and fine crafts, High Country Gallery brought clothing to the store in 1995. The new products took over the store immediately.

“We got to a point in the mid-nineties where it was either ‘clothes or close,’” jokes Toney.

Today clothing is approximately ninety percent of Toney’s business. She and her daughter and store manager Erica take pride in offering professional fashion “consultations” to their customers.

Having been raised in West Virginia, Toney moved to Los Angeles in her 20s where she studied, and eventually taught, fashion and image development to people preparing for media careers. While there, she honed her skills in makeup art and fashion coordination.

Bringing those skills back to West Virginia, as well as handing them down to her daughter, creates a place where the customers of High Country Boutique & Gallery can receive expert fashion assistance for the price of the clothes alone. Toney occasionally teaches classes on image development at her store.

When asked for any fashion advice for myself, Toney, referring to fashion trends and their inevitable cyclical nature, half-jokingly noted, “If you wore it once, don’t wear it again.”

According to Toney, about seventy percent of High Country Gallery’s clothing inventory consists of Eileen Fisher, a brand that customers are drawn to because they are highly functional.

“We get fresh orders every month,” she says, “and everything builds upon everything else, staying consistent throughout the line. So an item that a customer gets today can go with something they may have bought last year.”

Erica’s youth and unique perspective has shown many customers that the Eileen Fisher line is extremely versatile and can dress even young

stylish women. Toney notes that her regular customers range from their late teens to women in their 90s.

Toney says High Country Gallery still retains the art gallery because she loves it, although the art itself has changed over the years.

“After I married my South African husband, John

Francis, I got into African art, which is the majority now. But we carry global art that represents many countries including the USA,” she says.

Toney, who is also president of the Downtown Lewisburg Business Association, admits that for us it’s the clothing and service that keeps bringing the customers back.

“People say they trust me to tell them the truth,” she says. “I’ve actually told customers, ‘I will not sell you that.’ Because, in the end, I’m not just selling, I’m dressing great women.”

