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Janelle Lang is the founder and operator of Shoppe 561 in West Palm Beach, which offers work by artisans from Florida. Lang founded the business after a 25-year career with Gap Inc. BRUCE R. BENNETT / THE PALM BEACH POST

Founder of Shoppe 561 keeps focus on Florida

Business features work by state artisans, supports anti-human trafficking efforts.

By Charles Elmore
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

After 25 years with Gap Inc., Janelle Lang struck out on her own as an independent retailer with a strong sense of mission beyond just ringing up sales.

Shoppe 561 in West Palm Beach sells the work of artisans from around the state and offers classes from cooking to wine-tasting and flower arranging.

A core focus in all of it for Lang, 51: Support groups that fight human trafficking.

The business “shines a light on modern-day slavery” through educating customers and creating awareness by selling designated “hope items,” she said.

As July marks Independent Retailer Month, Shoppe 561 is celebrating its third anniversary and about to move into a larger space.

Name: Janelle Lang
Age: 39 and holding (seriously just turned 51, and embracing it as “the best is yet to come” year)

Hometown: Sherrill, N.Y.
Where you live now: West Palm Beach

About your company: Shoppe 561 opened its doors Nov. 1, 2013. The shop, at 319 Belvedere Road, is filled with all things made by Florida artisans with the underlying theme of

MONDAY MEETING

A Q&A WITH ...

JANELLE LANG
Owner of Shoppe 561

hope. We use the old English spelling of shoppe because hope is always in the shoppe. The shop also shines a light on modern-day slavery through educating customers, creating awareness and supporting Hope House Florida, which is a safe house for minor girls rescued from human trafficking. (Hope House is part of Place of Hope).

How your business has changed: The shop opened with 20 artisans and we offered an all-natural soapmaking class. We now have over 70 artisans and over 10 class offerings from cooking, wine tasting, flower arranging, perfume making and much more. We’ve also created a great online presence. Not only can we sell many of our artisan goods online, but shoppers can create gift registries/wish lists and can also easily register for classes.

The past two years we have been business partners with Palm Beach Public and South Olive elementary schools and showcase their artwork throughout the school year and host shopping events to raise money for

their art programs.

The great news is we have outgrown our space and will be moving to a new location Sept. 1 when our current lease ends. The move will give us additional space to flex class sizes as well as carry additional product categories.

First paying job and what you learned from it: Baby-sitting. I learned to be fully engaged and present in the moment and the importance of communicating what’s next.

First break in the business: I started right out of college with Gap Inc. as an assistant store manager in Syracuse, N.Y. Six months later, I was offered a promotion to store manager if I would relocate, which ultimately led to six relocations during my 25½ years at Gap. I worked in a variety of departments and spent six years at headquarters in San Francisco. I was part of the launch of babyGap as well overseeing the operations, customer service and fulfillment team when www.gap.com launched.

Best business book you ever read: Many great ones, but my current favorite is “Rookie Smarts,” by Liz Wiseman. The premise is veterans tend to rely on experience, place limitations and protect their territory while the rookie sees new possibilities, asks more questions and is willing to look for experts to help, ultimately helping them rise above the status quo. It challenges the veterans to think/act like rookies.

Best piece of business advice you ever received: Fail to plan, plan to fail.

What you tell young people about your business: Asking questions and seeking to understand is mission critical to success. For example, our Wednesday Night Enrichment series was a result of asking questions of attendees of a class in April. The series has been such a success we had to create a Thursday Night Enrichment Series. One of our most popular classes has been our Summer Entertaining Cooking series with Clay Carnes and cooking was specifically one of the classes requested.

What do you see ahead for Palm Beach County? I see continued growth of small businesses and people placing a priority on shopping and eating local.

Where we can find you when you are not at work: When I am not at the shop you will find me outdoors biking, attempting to keep my small garden looking good, and connecting with family and friends. Many a night you will find me at Grato sitting at the pizza bar – great food, awesome service and open late, which is perfect for my schedule.

Favorite smartphone app: ABM (a beautiful mess)

What is the most important trait you look for when hiring? Personal drive (initiative).

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