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Bridal boutique to make new home in Gaithersburg's Crown community

By Jenn Davis

When preparing to open her first bridal shop in Urbana in April 2012, Brandi Berkheimer-Tan put a hiring post on Craigslist in search of a bridal seamstress so that her customers could use the in-house service.

After meeting one of the applicants, Tirza Fogle, Berkheimer-Tan knew she found more than just a seamstress.

"Tirza was one of the four that replied to the ad. I set up a meeting with her and we just clicked instantaneously. It was so weird," Berkheimer-Tan said.

The two friends and busy moms — Berkheimer-Tan and Fogle have five sons under the age of 5 between them — have worked together ever since. Berkheimer-Tan lives in Frederick and Fogle resides in Walkersville.

With a desire to expand the Urbana boutique, Posh Bridal, and start a new venture together, the duo decided to open a second shop at Gaithersburg's new Downtown Crown community. Couture by Posh Bridal is still under construction at its 111 Crown Park Ave. site, but is expected to open Oct. 3.

To mark the opening, the shop will give 12 percent off to the first 10 brides who purchase their dress. Those who purchase a gown during opening week can still receive 10 percent off. Bridesmaid dresses and accessories will also be discounted.

Crown was chosen as the location for the newest boutique because of its growing presence as a lively community of shops and restaurants, Berkheimer-Tan said.

"Being able to really attract the age demographic that we're looking to target the most was probably the biggest draw," she said.

"And we get to put our own stamp on it because we're not taking over someone's space that has already been established or built up," Fogle added.

Once open, the shop will carry about 200 bridal gowns, as well as dresses for bridesmaids and the mother of the bride, tuxedos, accessories and possibly prom attire, Berkheimer-Tan said.

Wedding gowns will range in price from around \$1,000 to \$7,000, according to Berkheimer-Tan and Fogle. Some of the lines that will be carried include Allure Couture, Martina Liana, Signature by Justin Alexander, Essence of Australia, Stella York and Madison James.

Twice per year, the women go to market to select new additions to their inventory.

"Every year we have to pick up so many dresses to keep current with all of the designers and the trends," Fogle said.

The women said their main goal is to provide all of their customers with an intimate, personalized experience, beyond just the purchasing of the dress.

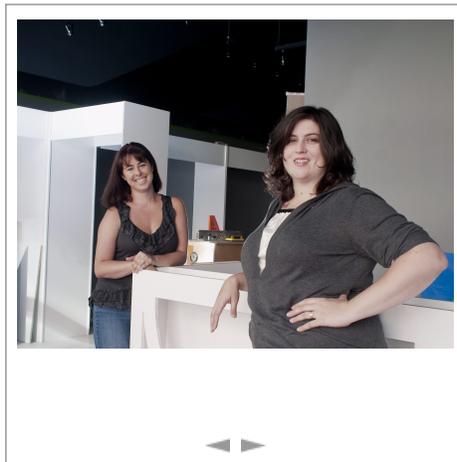
"We hope to kind of make you feel like part of our family," Berkheimer-Tan said, noting that the two often become close with their clients and keep in touch with them well after their weddings.

Fogle and Berkheimer-Tan talked about how enjoyable it is to meet brides, along with their family and friends, and to watch them as they move through the stages of the wedding planning process.

"That week before [the wedding] they usually all come pick everything up together and so you get to see this big group of people and how happy and excited and energized they are, and then they go off and do this big thing," said Fogle. "So it's so much fun to be part of all of that and to help build the energy for it."

Overall, development is bustling at the 182-acre mixed-use Crown community, which sits just off Interstate 270 at Exit 9.

Downtown Crown has nearly 260,000 square feet of retail and only 63,000 of it remains unleased, according to Crown



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spokeswoman Tammy Murphy. More than a dozen businesses are now open, including Harris Teeter, Paladar Latin Kitchen and Rum Bar, Venti Tre Modern Italian, Smashburger, Floyd's 99 Barbershop, Wells Fargo, and Downtown Crown Wine and Beer.

The apartment community, Cadence at Crown, is also open and has residents, Murphy added.

This fall will see the opening of more establishments such as Ruth's Chris Steak House, Yogiberry, & pizza, Crown Cleaners and Massage Envy.

In regards to residential development, more than 120 homes have been completed and about 50 more are currently under construction, Murphy said. Homeowners have closed on nearly 100 homes.

When fully complete, Crown will include up to 2,250 residential units and 320,000 square feet of retail and commercial space.

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