

The Valley Press

New Antiques Center Brings Sophistication Home

By Larissa Lytwyn

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Burlington Inn Antiques
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The new Burlington Inn Antiques Center is a unique kind of shop, one where visitors can look *and* touch. “Everything here is about feeling,” owner Joni Schneider said. No heavy tape criss-crosses chairs or couches, blocking patrons from sitting. “We want you to feel at home,” said Schneider.

Folks seem to be feeling cozy. Since opening September 16, business has boomed, according to Schneider and business associate Jane Hadley, former owner of The Balcony, an antique shop in Canton. “A lot of people said it would be challenging to open a business during a recession, but my husband, Bob, and I, already owned the building,” Schneider said. For over a decade, the site was home to one of Schneider’s six Farmington Valley childcare centers. Schneider, however, was ready to try something different.

Since her family—four children and seven grandchildren—became more involved in running the childcare facilities, Schneider began thinking of fresh ventures. “I love people and hearing their stories,” Schneider said. “I’ve always enjoyed antiques and collecting because of the stories behind them. I decided opening an antique center might be fun.” Although not a dealer, Schneider enjoys patronizing local antique shops and auction houses. Her pieces, as well as her husbands, are among Burlington Inn’s wide range of offerings, including furniture; jewelry; dolls; glassware; porcelains; clothing; toys; military weaponry and Western-style collectibles.

The Avon resident is also a major arts supporter. Through her partnership with Hadley, an antiques dealer with close ties to the area’s arts community, Schneider quickly attracted a diverse group of dealers—and artists. Burlington Inn features prominent local painters including Allen Freshler, John LaFalce, Al Rifkin, Claudia Ludovici and Carmel Sullivan. “We always welcome new artists of various styles,” Schneider said. Next, Hadley wants to add contemporary Western-style pottery to the mix. “Pottery has a wide appeal,” she said.

Schneider’s daughter, Hollee, an interior designer and graphic artist, is also involved in her mother’s newest enterprise. In addition to helping track Burlington Inn’s inventory, she designed the center’s business cards and helps manage its website. “We are growing quickly, which is great to see,” she said. “We try to provide a memorably warm, inviting atmosphere. It’s always interesting to come in and see an item I remember being in my mother’s house when I was ten!”

Schneider said the center currently has between 25 and 30 dealers. “It’s been wonderful to see the growing interest,” she said. “I love learning new things and hearing people remember the stories behind the items they collect.” Schneider holds a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology. “I believe the pieces we’re drawn to are a reflection of ourselves,” she adds with a laugh. “I love bright things, like Fiesta ware! It’s interesting to see what people are looking for.”

Burlington Inn’s services include consignment; appraisals; trade arrangements; gift registries and estate liquidation. Financing plans are also available. Visitors will soon be able to shop online. To learn more, visit the Burlington Inn Antiques Center website at <http://www.burlingtoninnantiques.com> Sunday. The center is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. For more information, call Joni at (860) 404-1780.