

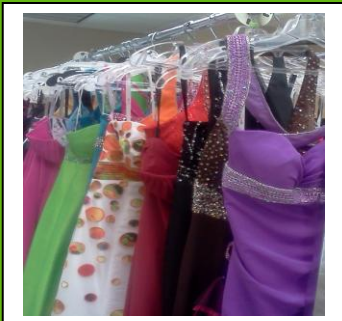


Ruth Mowen
Up Scale Consignment Shop
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Franklin County
www.upscalega.com

"The Chamber recommended the SBDC. The information they provided was invaluable. I don't know how people start small businesses unless they have help."

Ruth Mowen

Industry: Consignment Shop
Year Founded: 2011
SBDC Assistance: Startup Assistance, Market Research
Additional Partners: Chamber of Commerce



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Choosing to be a Consignee, not a Retiree

Ruth Mowen loved her job as the head of Vizada Satellite Services' customer care department. In July 2011 however, after 23 years at the company, her position was eliminated. Ruth wasn't ready to retire, so she decided to find a new career. She wanted to stay close to home and work with people, and decided to become an entrepreneur.

"I thought about selling on the internet, and I decided that's lonely," said Ruth. Then she contemplated starting a flea market or an antique shop, but that wasn't for her either. Instead, after talking to a close friend whose daughter recently opened a consignment shop, she considered the consignment industry. Ruth went online and found that consignment shops are one of the recommended businesses to open in the struggling economy. "I wasn't interested in doing a high risk thing," said Ruth. On October 1st, just three months after losing her job, Ruth opened Up Scale Consignment Shop.

The new shop, located in Greencastle, has clothing, china, crystal, shoes, handbags, jewelry, pet supplies, decorations, knickknacks and many other well-kept consignment items. Ruth prides herself in living up to the store's name. "The name 'Up Scale' does not refer to only carrying name brand things, it refers to the inventory being clean and well displayed," said Ruth. "When you come in I want you to feel like it's a place you'll come back to." Along with consignment pieces, Ruth has 78 wedding gowns and more than 200 formal dresses she purchased, along with store fixtures, from a bridal store that was closing.

Ruth had no prior business experience, so when she made up her mind to open Up Scale Consignment Shop, she went to her sister Pat Shew for advice. Pat recommended that Ruth join the Greencastle Chamber of Commerce. Through the Chamber, Ruth discovered the Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

The SBDC was a tremendous help to Ruth in getting her business up and running. "I didn't know anything," said Ruth. "I never thought about things like insurance and a business plan. The SBDC pointed out things I never thought of. They helped me with the very, very basics, with the things that are extremely important that you need to set up from the beginning." The SBDC helped Ruth with startup assistance such as registering her fictitious name, getting her tax number, setting up insurance and giving her other business advice like how to create a business bank account. The SBDC directed Ruth to the correct people and resources, so that she was able to create a successful, structured business.

Since the opening in October, Ruth has been pleased with the number of customers visiting Up Scale Consignment Shop, and she is looking forward to the growth of the business. "We've got a lot of traffic," Ruth said. With 115 consignors, Ruth is amazed with the amount of consignment items coming to her store. "I have gotten a lot more consignment items than I ever dreamed I'd get," Ruth said. Her biggest challenge is handling the inventory and making sure that the store is not too crowded.

Ruth is very grateful for the help of the SBDC and says the information she received from them was invaluable. Ruth said it is nice knowing that the SBDC cares about the success of her business and check in on her every once in a while. She feels comfort in knowing that the SBDC is there if she needs future business assistance and advocates to "any new business starting up - the SBDC services are excellent and it really would be very beneficial to go to the SBDC to help you set up."