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PAINT THE TOWN RED WITH DIANE MCKENZIE

Larger-sized ladies have a great new fashion retail option at 63 St Andrew St, Dunedin.

It's called Paint The Town Red and means it. This is a place that flies the flag for those sized 14 to 24, where owner Diane McKenzie guides customers through her exceptional range of garments towards a sound choice in fit and style.

"I want to make their visits to the store rewarding, good for the spirit and most of all, fun," she says, adding that the shop is all about attitude through clothing.

Diane opened the new business with an already broad knowledge of the competitive fashion retail industry. This shows.

The store brims with fashion clothes representing casual and dressy separates, smart office wear and knits through to beautiful special-occasion pieces. Racks on one side represent high-end fashion labels such as E Design, silkbody, Chocolat and Bittermoon. On the other are price-driven brands including Lucabella, Zeroe, and Cordellia Collection. Scarves and jewellery add to the provocative mix.

Diane's first venture into retail was in Lower Hutt. Turning 40, she had taken a hard look at her successful career as a senior accountant in a multinational firm in Wellington and realised it was not enjoyable any more.

She made a radical move and opened Garb By Annah S, a franchise store featuring Annah Stretton's ranges for fuller figures. She built it up from scratch, thriving on the challenges and, more especially, helping those with fuller figures like herself.

"I loved watching customers gradually build confidence and begin experimenting with garments. I learnt a lot in the five years I had the store."

It then came time for Diane, who grew up in South Otago and is a University of Otago graduate, to head back South to be closer to her mother, her sisters and their families. "I'd planned on opening a store for larger sizes down here and was prepared to bide my time until the right outlet came up."

In the three-year interim she initially toured the summer markets with her own jewellery range, before an accounting position arose at Cadburys in Dunedin. "The markets were a chance for me to renew friendships and also allowed me to carry out some research into what women of larger sizes down here wanted in a fashion store."

Her perception that Paint The Town Red would target a broad catchment of women from throughout the Otago region is already proving right. Word has spread since its opening on March 14 and business is quickly building.



Diane McKenzie In Her New Dunedin Store For Fuller Figures.