

Finding Treasure

Go Lightly Consignment Boutique is saving the planet (and helping others), one accessory (and fashion show) at a time.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Laura Jean Whitcomb*

The Colonial Plaza is abuzz with the prospect of a fashion show.

A couple enters Nonni's Italian Eatery, co-sponsor of the event, and asks, "Are you open for lunch?"

"Oh yes," Nonni's host, Tom, answers. "The fashion show is at 2. There's plenty of time for lunch before then."

It's Saturday morning, and the preparations for the first Go Lightly Consignment Boutique fashion show have been in progress for hours, maybe even days. The outfits, a mix of modern and vintage, were carefully planned by Arrolyn Vernon, owner of the boutique, and her eight models. She steamed the clothes on Friday, and organized them on a rack with their matching accessories. The models woke up early and went to their respective hair salons — New London Hair Studio, New Beginnings and aesthetics — that morning. By noon, Vernon is wearing a tread in the hallway from the door of her shop to the door of Nonni's, located across the hall in the Colonial Plaza building.

She sets up the red carpet, courtesy of Floorcraft in Wilmot, with Tom's help.

"Do you think that is enough room?" Tom asks of the space set up for the runway. "The carpet comes out far

enough so the girls can turn and show their outfits to the people at the bar."

"I love that idea," says Vernon. "Wait until you see what I'm wearing. It's an evening gown paired with a leather jacket." She heads back to her store to check on her models: Brittany Martell-Harris, Holly Von Svaboda, Deborah Lambert, Beth Putnam, Jo Woodward, Kim Tedeschi and Sarah Piedmont. "I'm feeling a lot calmer than I should be."

Designer duds, old and new

Vernon didn't plan on being a business owner.

In 2009, she was pursuing graduate school, planning a career as an English professor. In order to offset the cost of living in Boston, she took a part-time job at a consignment store. "My job became more of an exciting pursuit for me than my graduate degree, so I decided to wait on furthering my education," she says. Then it all fell into place: the space in the Colonial Plaza building became available at the same time that Vernon was considering moving back to New Hampshire, where she was born and raised. She moved to New London in November 2009 and opened Go Lightly Consignment Boutique a month later.

Go Lightly offers a wide range of women's contemporary, vintage and



Holly Von Svaboda works the runway; Deborah Lambert, in the colorful dress, is up next.

designer fashion. From an olive green Coach purse to a tiny pin realistically shaped like a vintage electric fan, chances are you'll find an accessory or an outfit to meet your needs. Not only will you find it at a reasonable price, you'll be doing a good thing for the environment by purchasing a secondhand item.

"There was a time in my life when my love for fashion fought with the environmentalist in me. I tried to suppress my tendencies toward fashion but, as I aged and gained more self-awareness and self-acceptance, I saw less of a point in suppression and more of a point in striving for harmony. Hello, second

More info

Go Lightly Consignment Boutique is located 255 Newport Road, Unit #6, in New London. Hours and consignment details are available online at <http://golightlyconsignment.weebly.com>

hand!” Vernon says. “From national thrift to community thrift, from yard sales to church sales, from casual consignment to designer consignment, from the \$1 bin to the \$100 rack, if it was second hand I was there. I loved the idea of helping to turn the cogs of recycling.”

Although vintage clothing is popular in larger cities, like Boston, Vernon wasn’t sure about the market in New London. She decided to keep a vintage rack in her shop, and it has been one of the most active racks in the store. Vernon is pleased with the response. “Vintage is very near and dear to my heart: it embodies the idea of recycling/renewal, but it’s also the closest we come to fashion history,” she says. “I love the extremely high quality of vintage but also the ultra-feminine silhouettes, the surprising details, and the romance of wearing something from women of our past. Wearing vintage is an experience.”

With prices rising on all consumer goods, shopping smart — consignment shops, thrift stores and secondhand shops — has become the norm. Go Lightly opened at the right time, and continues to grow. “Go Lightly is like a fun, old friend: there are just the right amounts of comfort, coziness, flare and fabulousness,” Vernon says. “I’ve never had so much fun in my life.”

Creating a look

The models have eaten lunch, and now it’s time to get dressed. There are still a few details to work out with each outfit, which Vernon has planned as “a blend of modern and vintage garments and accessories. We really wanted to capture the personality, age and body type of each model, while also showcasing some fun, out-of-the-box fashion concepts,” she describes. “Each day and night look either had a vintage focal point with modern accessories, or was modern with vintage accessories. For example, Jo Woodward wore a military-style 1960s dress with modern accessories for her day look and a formal 1980s dress with modern accessories for her evening look.”

“Should we see what shoes work?” Beth Putnam asks.

Anica Scekcic, the make-up artist, turns to Vernon. “Is it too early to put the outfits on?”

“No, why don’t we?” says Vernon. “Then I can see what shoes will work with the outfit.”

Putnam brings her outfit to the dressing room, while Vernon brings Sarah Piedmont’s laptop to Tim Burns of NH Audio and Visual. “Alright, wake that computer up,” he says.

Putnam comes out of the dressing room. She’s wearing 1970s maxi dress with modern velvet blazer. “Instead of the tasseled belt, I changed it to a Ralph Lauren leather belt,” Vernon explains. “It makes the whole outfit look more sophisticated.” The girls agree, and Putnam puts on her jewelry — silver and gold bangles on one arm, and vintage Chanel earrings on both earlobes.

“Do you have a purse to go with that?” Scekcic asks.

“No, but we can certainly find one,” Putnam says.

But before the ladies look for a purse, there’s some discussion over the shoes. The black heels are deemed too high for the skirt, and the red shoes are somewhat jarring, although they are flats and the right style for the outfit. “I don’t like the red,” Vernon shakes her head. “It completely drowns the outfit.”

Putnam tries on a variety of other shoes, all flats, before finding a gold pair on a shelf in the shop. They work. The girls are relieved.

For a good cause

The idea of a fashion show came about when all the businesses in the Colonial Plaza wanted to host a Christmas event. “A fashion show felt like the best contribution for Go Lightly,” Vernon says.

She paired the fashion show with a charitable incentive: a fundraiser for the Lake Sunapee Region Visiting Nurse

Association & Hospice (LSRVNA). “Not only has it impacted my life on a personal level, but the very infrastructure upon which the VNA is built is something I really believe in. We are so lucky to have them,” she says.

With the sound check complete and the models dressed, Vernon holds a quick rehearsal in Go Lightly so she can run through her lines and make sure she thanks everyone who has helped. Two teenagers pop their heads into the store. “Nonni’s is packed!” one says.

The ladies cheer.

Nonni’s is indeed packed. Every booth is filled, people are standing in the doorway, and seated around the bar. A quick head counts tallies about 75 people.

By 2:04, no chairs are left. A waitress comments how dramatically things changed. “We only had three tables filled 10 minutes ago!” she says.

The fashion show starts and, in a blaze of color and sparkle, it ends a half hour later. It has showcased Vernon’s innate fashion sense, raised almost \$800 for the LSRVNA, and provided a fun afternoon for anyone interested in clothing.

Vernon’s adrenaline is starting to wear off, but she’s all smiles. “We definitely want to have another fashion show,” she says. “Bigger and better this time.” 



Arrolyn Vernon, owner of Go Lightly Consignment Boutique, oversees a rehearsal for the fashion show.