



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN POIRIER

Sisters Barb DeBerge-Henken, left, and Kim Baas own and operate DeBerge's, a Kenosha store their great-grandfather opened in 1890.

Taking care of the family business

When Kim Baas and Barb DeBerge-Henken were little girls, they built forts in the back room of their family's art and framing shop.

Today, the sisters own and operate that shop, DeBerge's, at 2008 63rd St. in Kenosha.

Their great-grandfather Henry F. DeBerge opened the store in 1890 as an arts and crafts catch-all, one-stop shopping for everything from homemade paint and wallpaper to doily-making supplies.

Three generations of men, all sole proprietors, ran the shop until Baas and DeBerge-Henken's father, Henry E. DeBerge, died in 1975. Their mother, Lucy DeBerge, took over her husband's store

and, with help from her daughters, ran it until 1996, when Baas and DeBerge-Henken became partners.

Coming into a workplace so full of family history can't help but remind the sisters of their past.

Just the sound of the vintage cabinets, with their sliding doors, turns their minds back to childhood days, when they cleared off the paint shelves in the back room and made those forts.

"It's interesting to come full circle," said DeBerge-Henken, 57, of Kenosha.

Running the business together has come as naturally as being sisters, minus the sibling squabbles.

Baas handles maintenance, engineering, figuring out technical stuff. DeBerge-Henken does the books.

Each considers the other equally cre-

ative, although DeBerge-Henken wears her flair on her yellow-striped T-shirt and purple-sweatered sleeves, while Baas is more likely to dress casually in a T-shirt and a hoodie.

"It's a balance," said Baas, 50, of Kenosha. "We both know our gifts, our talents, and bring that to the business."

DeBerge-Henken said that because they're sisters, they know each other very well.

"If she's grumpy, if I'm grumpy, we know it. We don't even have to say anything," she said. "When we're in the workplace, we're business partners. But because we're sisters, it makes it a lot more fun. We really have fun.

"And, oh, the back room talk. It's a pleasure to walk through the doors and be in business with your sister."