



A vintage track trophy sits on a shelf at Buster's Antiques. The shop in the Grand Central District sells everything from antique furniture to chalk paint.

JAMILA DEDMON | SNN

# Antiques and more

Buster's Antiques sells unique items from past years, but makes a lot of its profit from selling a special paint that re-creates an antique look.

BY ELI TRIPPI  
SNN Staff Writer

When you walk on Central Avenue, there are many places that catch your attention and one of them is Buster's Antiques. A local business owned by Keith Gilbert, Buster's sells anything from antique furniture to chalk paint. The shop was named after his French bulldog, Buster, and the name has stuck ever since.

"I ran it past the family and everyone liked it," Gilbert said.

Gilbert was born in Cocoa Beach, Fla., and is a University of Florida graduate. He lived in Washington D.C. most of his life and opened his shop in St. Petersburg three years ago.

The shop doesn't just sell antiques like a customer might assume. It sells a unique type of paint called chalk paint which people can use to make their own custom creations. They hold a workshop on some weekends to teach the community how to use the paint, which re-creates an antique look. Gilbert's business is profitable and most of his profits surprisingly comes from the chalk paint.

"I like to teach people how to make popular things with the paint," Gilbert said.

Buster's has sold a lot of old and unique items throughout the years. He sold an antique set of silver as well as many pieces from the early 1900's.

"It's what makes my shop different," Gilbert said.

While much is going well with Gilbert's shop, recently, the St. Pete Pride Parade was moved to the downtown waterfront, away from the Grand Central District where Buster's is located. He said he was disappointed that it moved because it always brought people into the shop looking at all of the different pieces and items.

"Even if people weren't buying things, it still made my business more popular because the word goes around," Gilbert said.

Buster's Antiques is at 2536 Central Ave. in St. Petersburg. The shop is closed on Mondays but open the rest of the week from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.



Cans of chalk paint sit on shelves at Buster's Antiques.

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An assortment of knick-knacks is displayed on shelves at Buster's Antiques.

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Pieces of a Dream owner Patti Bradford said she chooses items to sell in her store that she likes and that she thinks customers will like.

ZHANARRIA MOHOGANY | SNN

# It's her dream shop

BY ANGEL MOSS AND NATACHA OLIVERO  
SNN Staff Writers

A boutique called Pieces of a Dream sells lotions, soaps, little knick-knacks, jewelry and clothes. The shop at 2430 Central Ave. in the Grand Central District opened one year ago.

"The shop is like a gift to myself," owner Patti Bradford, 56, said.

Bradfield, whose daughter, Clarissa, is a Lakewood High alumna, has been in the apparel business for 20 years. She started off working in department stores and so far, she's owned two shops of her own. While her current location is prosperous, her previous location further out on Central toward the beach wasn't as successful.

"There was no walking space for customers, just streets with hundreds of passing cars that would not even consider going in," Bradfield said.

Bradfield said there is never really a typical day for her. Each day is different.

"Other than a huge Chinese New Year's block party that I help decorate, and organizing the shop there's really no anything typical," she said.

She said that she has to keep the shop clean and organized.



Tiny sculptures created by different artists line the shelves at Pieces of a Dream.

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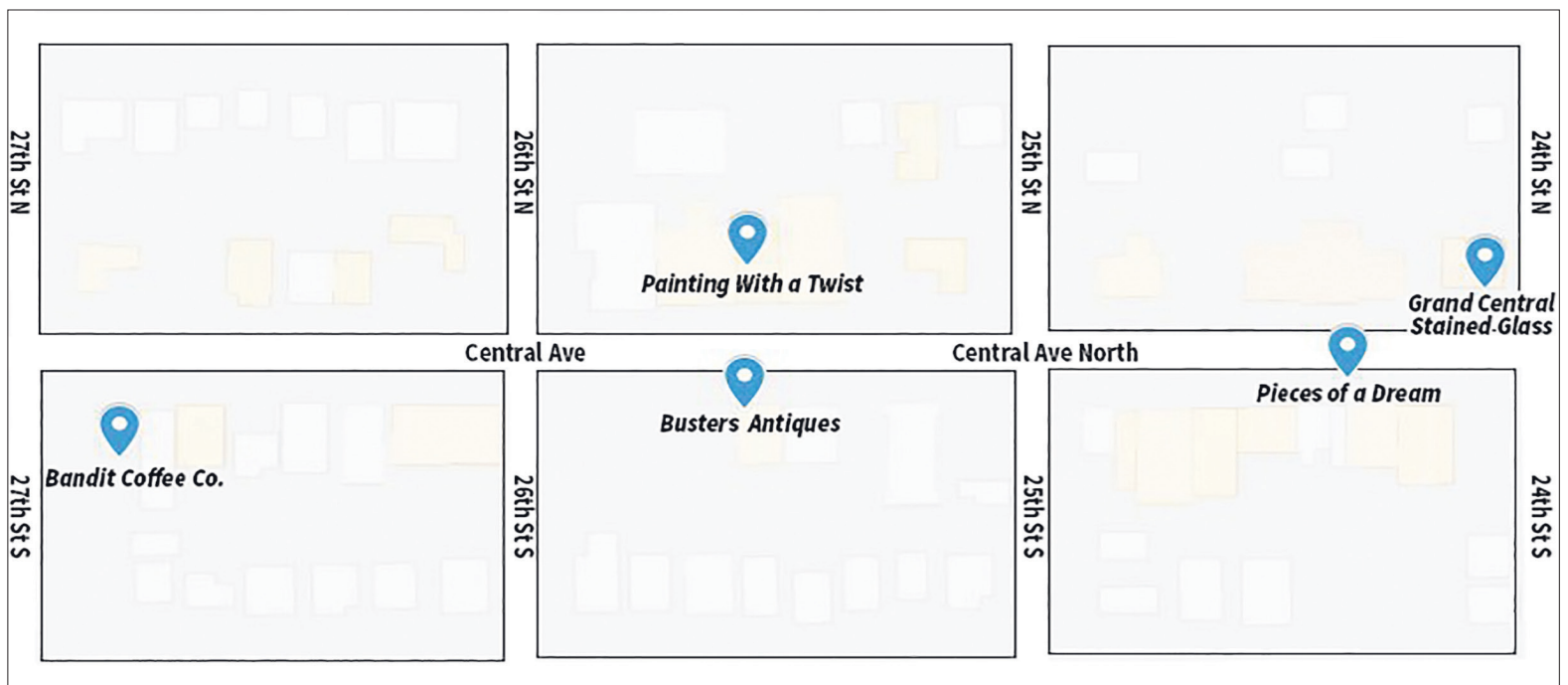
"I have to organize a lot to keep the store looking attractive to gain potential customers," she said.

When she chooses items to feature in the store, she doesn't buy just what she likes but what she thinks other people will like.

"It seems to work," she said.

# Grand Central District

Students in the Center for Journalism and Multimedia visited businesses in a three-block area of the Grand Central District in St. Petersburg in January. The district's mission is to create a sense of community and to promote economic development. From shops to dining, the Grand Central District has it all. Each business has a story, and we're here to tell some of them.



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Employee Madison Binder pours hot water over coffee grounds to make a pot of coffee at Bandit Coffee, a new shop in the Grand Central District.

# Community coffee

Bandit Coffee in the Grand Central District celebrates its one-year anniversary.

BY ZACKERY THOMAS AND DEREK SCOTT  
SNN Staff Writers

The black and white building, constructed in 1959, has a calm vibe to it. It has huge glass windows in the front of the shop. Inside, customers relax, working on laptops, doing homework, having casual conversation as they drink coffee and eat desserts and pastries.

"(Their) coffee is amazing," said Roma Ostman, 20, a semi-regular customer at Bandit Coffee, 2662 Central Ave.

Sarah Weaver, 26, is the owner of the shop in the Grand Central District of St. Petersburg. The coffee shop just had its one-year anniversary on Feb. 1. Weaver is a first-time business owner who's running a coffee shop with about 200 customers a day and attracting more customers on the weekends.

"(It was) a way for us to give back to the community," Weaver said.

The coffee shop opens at 8 a.m. but doesn't start to attract customers until 9-10 a.m. By noon the coffee shop is full, she said.

"It's more of an industrial shop. ... We really love the space," Weaver said. "My husband and I designed the shop."

Customer Scott Sterling found out about the shop from Facebook.

"Anytime a new place opens, I have to try it," Sterling said. When you own a business you're going to have fun and

you're going to have difficulties, Weaver said. When you own a coffee shop you better like people or else it won't be a very fun job.

"(The best part is) being able to meet new people and engaging with customers," Weaver said.

"The worst part might not be what you would expect.

"Trying not to get over caffeinated," Weaver said.

The menu at Bandit Coffee is basic. It was made like that to try and throw away any confusion. Their pastries are not made on site but are delivered from a nearby bakery. They have cookies, vegan donuts and brownies.

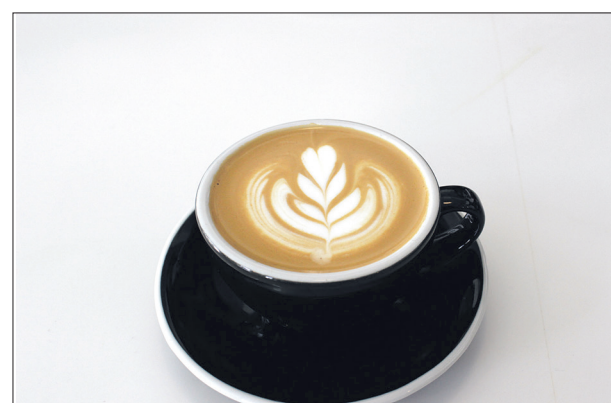
"We're just trying to keep it simple," Weaver said.

"We love bringing in coffee from across the country," Weaver said.

The most popular item on their menu is a handmade 10-ounce coffee with milk followed by vanilla bean and bourbon.

Bandit Coffee does not have any plans to expand to other locations. The space is big enough for now, she said.

Weaver didn't start her life off by jumping right into running a coffee shop. Before she owned the shop she was a



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An employee created a design with foamy cream on the top of a cup of coffee.

graphic designer who was born and raised in St. Petersburg. But graphic designing didn't really work out.

"I reached a crossroads. ... I couldn't be happier with my decision," Weaver said.

The shop focuses on the people who come there. They try to show that they intentionally care about people by trying to use minimalism values.

"We want to give you the best experience possible," Weaver said.



HIBLA AITGRIF | SNN

Eloyne Erickson, owner of Grand Central Stained Glass, cleans a piece of stained glass that she is working on for a customer.

# Stained glass business is pretty grand

BY CRISTIN THOMAS  
SNN Staff Writer

Erickson stands at a light table with multiple pieces of glass that need to be fit into a single stained-glass pane.

"A gentleman brought this in in pieces. ... It's a very, very old piece," she said.

Erickson and her husband, Bradley Erickson, own Grand Central Stained Glass, 2401 Central Ave. It is half stained-glass work shop, half digital-design business. Eloyne runs the stained glass half, while Bradley runs the digital design half.

Customers can come in to place an order, take a class or buy one of their fine works. The shop offers fused glass classes, stained glass classes and mosaic classes. You can go to these classes to meet new people, try something new and make a masterpiece. Or you can visit the digital art half of the shop and buy a photo of a painting or turn your painting into one.

The Ericksons' growing business has been located at three storefronts in the last 11 years, all on the same street.

"It's nice to be able to look across the street and see our original home," Bradley said.

Their current, larger shop, however, is better for long-term growth.

Bradley said his digital art ties into his wife's stained glass store. He draws outlines for her projects, which are then set on a table with a light underneath.

"Like a coloring book, but instead of coloring with a crayon you are cutting and fitting pieces of glass," Bradley



HIBLA AITGRIF | SNN

A stained-glass sun and moon that hangs in the front window is the logo for Grand Central Stained Glass.

said.

Bradley scans local and national artists' paintings and then either sells them or sends them back to the original artist. He scans them by panels on a scanning bed and then places them together in Photoshop. It takes about three hours to do the scanning and placing it together goes fairly quickly. He works with around 400 local and national artists.

The couple has been working together since the business started.

"Working with my wife has its ups and downs," Bradley said. "More or less it is actually very good. That isn't a function of being a husband and wife, it's about running a business."



TYLER GRAHAM | SNN

Manager Beth Golden shows off two paintings that she made. She uses the paintings when she teaches classes.

# Learn how to paint - with a twist

BY CAYLA HESTER AND KAZI HAQUE  
SNN Staff Writers

Customers can come to Painting With A Twist with little to no experience in art and leave with a piece of their own artwork.

"You walk in with a blank canvas and leave with a beautiful piece of work," manager Beth Golden said.

The business at 2527 Central Ave. in St. Petersburg has been open since 2007, and Golden has worked at the business for two years. Her background is actually in the culinary field, but she found transitioning to her new career easy because cooking and painting are similar in her eyes.

It only took a few years for the business to pop up with the help of brochures and newspaper ads. The business has several other locations, and now other similar businesses have started giving them some competition.

The days can be busy from scheduling customers to artists preplanning their works of art for the day. The business offers art classes every day.

"Guests are taught step by step through a painting," Golden said.

The business has a database of 8,000 different works of art for customers to choose from. Classes are \$35 for a two-hour class and \$45 for three hours.

The business is also good for the community because each month it does a fundraising event and donates half of its daily proceeds to charity. In

the past, it has held fundraisers for the Humane Society, the Heart Foundation and the Kidney Foundation.

Artist Robert Riedel, one of the artists who works at Painting With A Twist, said he first became interested in art as a young boy when he was fidgeting in church. To keep him still, his mother gave him coloring books and colored pencils.

A little over a year ago, he found out about a job possibility at Painting With A Twist.

"I walked in here out of curiosity and learned I could help people, so it was interesting," Riedel said. "All you really need (to work at Painting With A Twist) is an art background, a good personality and a sense of humor."