

One in a *Ver* Million

Meet Emily Sudbeck



By David Lias
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Taking over the ownership of a long-time retail business in the heart of downtown Vermillion sounds like a daunting task.

But Emily Sudbeck, new owner of Willson Florist and Gifts, said the transition has been an easy one, in part because of the help she still receives from former owners Howard and Alice Willson.

"Howard is still here to help me when I need it. Both he and Alice are always available, and they're so good if I have any questions," Emily said.

Willson Florist and Gifts has been a Main Street landmark in the Vermillion community since Aug. 3, 1959. Howard and Alice Willson took over for Howard's parents, John and Arvilla, and operated the business together since they were married in 1968.

Emily Sudbeck has fully hit her stride as the owner of Willson Florist, taking over ownership of the business from the Willsons on July 1 last year. Another factor making her role as the shop's owner less daunting is her familiarity with the business.

Emily is originally from Akron, IA, and lived in Vermillion while a student at USD. That's when she first began working at the florist shop. She and her husband, Aaron, have settled in Vermillion.

"I graduated from here (USD) with a degree in art education. Basically, I was an art teacher," Emily said. "I worked here almost all throughout college. I worked here for about the past seven years, and when I was teaching, it was during the recession and my teaching position was part-time, so Howard was kind enough to let me stay and work, and I definitely enjoyed it. It was very nice to have the best of both worlds. I worked here on Mondays and Fridays and over the weekends."

That opportunity helped Emily "learn the ropes" of how this long-time Vermillion business operates.

"When Howard wasn't here, I ran the shop, so it wasn't completely unfamiliar to me," she said. "With my art background, I think of things maybe a little bit differently, and I have a new approach and I think Howard liked some of that."

"I still get to use my degree; I just get to use it in a different way," she said. "I've learned a lot over the years, but when I'm not familiar with something, they (Howard and Alice) are definitely good go-to people. There's always going to be some harder things that I'm not fully aware of, and definitely some longer hours."

Last month, for example, on Valentine's Day, the shop was "crazy busy," Emily said.

"My husband asked

me, 'Are you having fun? Do you love this?' and I said, 'I'm having a great time. I do love this.' I'm so glad I did it (became the shop owner). It's a little scary to walk away from teaching and something that I went to school for and that I was trained for, but I'm very glad that I did it."

She is also happy that her new role as a Vermillion business owner still allows her to meet people on a daily basis.

"I love working with people, I really do. I think I've realized that over the years, especially if someone is having a bad day and they need something sweet sent to them," Emily said. "I love when the sender calls back and tells us that they really loved what they received from us."

She also fully realizes the comforting role that a florist shop plays when people are mourning the loss of a loved one.

"When there is a service pending, the family is sad when they come in, and if I can find a way to help them, that's important," Emily said. "I love hearing that they loved our product. I think that's what I really enjoy - helping people feel better through our products."

After a crazy Valentine's Day, another favorite time of the year will be here soon. June is the traditional month for weddings, and Emily said she loves planning the floral arrangements for couples planning to exchange vows.

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Clay-Union Electric Annual Meeting
will be held Tuesday, March 26, 2013 at the school gym in Gayville.
The meeting will feature reports on financial and work activities of your cooperative as well as director elections.

Gayville School Gym

Annual Meeting
March 26, 2013

REGISTRATION – begins at 5:00 p.m.. Every member who registers will receive a gift for registering at the meeting.

FREE MEAL – The meal will be served from 5:15 – 6:30 p.m. We will again feature seating at tables for your convenience.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM – For the children attending the meeting with their parents, we will provide supervised children's entertainment in a separate room during the business portion of the meeting.

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