

Happy Medium

Athens' newest store offers both men and women the clothing brands they desire, at a fraction of the price.



BY EMILY MCINTYRE
PHOTOS BY MAGGIE BOYLE

Amid the cluster of construction vehicles and chain-link fences on West Union Street are the familiar storefronts of The Union Bar & Grill, Jackie O's, and GoodFella's Pizza. Now, there's a new shop on the block.

Boasting both men's and women's apparel, 10 West Clothing Co. offers shoppers a variety of styles at bargain prices. Simply put, affordability is what owner Mary Cheadle aims for.

The idea to open 10 West sprouted from Cheadle going through the closets of her four daughters, combined with her love of shopping, and browsing through thrift stores.

"I just felt like, 'Wow, I could offer something that Athens doesn't have,' because one of my objectives was to try not to step on any other toes," she said. "I was very mindful to try to be a different clothing store than what we have [in Athens]."

Cheadle, who also owns Uptown Dog across the street, noticed that uptown Athens had nowhere for men to shop. Though she contemplated opening a store aimed at men only, she wanted to include women's apparel that was cheaper and less formal than some of the other local boutiques.



10 West has everything, including athleisure and casual wear, but it also has a section dubbed "Nearly New," which is synonymous for gently-used. Employee Hannah Morgan, who is also Cheadle's niece, is in charge of the "Nearly New"

section, as well as her own vintage rack that she has tagged separately from the rest of the merchandise.

"I started a vintage business earlier this year before the store opened, before I even started working here, and Mary offered for me to have my stuff here," Morgan said.

The name brands for less items and everyday basics such as blank sweatshirts and sweatpants have also been a hit, especially since it's important to layer in the bitter cold winters of Ohio.

"I was surprised. I thought everyone wanted to wear OU [apparel] all the time," Cheadle said. "We were getting that feedback like 'We're thrilled to have a place to buy stuff uptown that's not always a printed garment,'" Cheadle said.

The store also carries quite a bit of clothing from Delia's and Aeropostale, because both of those stores are facing bankruptcy and closing stores.

Cheadle graduated from Ohio University in 1989 with a degree in art education and worked for her brother, who had owned Uptown Dog at the time, while waiting for a teaching opportunity to present itself. Her plans changed when she fell in love with what she was doing at the store.

"At the time, I was the same age as the college students, so I was relating and I was able to

help give my input into styles," Cheadle said. "It's getting a little harder to relate on that level, but that's why I have a staff that is typically college students. I try to get a versatile group, so that I have feedback from people about what's trending right now."

Over the years, Cheadle has carefully watched Court Street add more bars and restaurants rather than places to shop. With

that progression, she feels that the locals who live in Athens year-round don't visit Uptown as often when students saturate the town during the school year. In addition, the fashion scene uptown has evolved over time.

"Now it's become more of a melting pot almost right here in Athens," Cheadle said. Cheadle explained that many students mix different tastes

and aesthetics, varying in style from khakis to athleisure and everything in between.

Another need that the owner has fulfilled is a supply of ties for men, because ties typically aren't at the forefront of a guy's mind when assembling a wardrobe for college.

"It blows my mind, but you think about it, and you come to these classes and you might not





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know that you needed to bring an outfit for a presentation,” Cheadle said.

As for publicity, 10 West wasn’t getting much attention due to the construction on Union Street partially blocking the storefront.

“That’s been our main struggle. People don’t even know that this building is basically up, so we’re trying to get the word out,” Morgan said.

But the small response they have received has been gratifyingly positive.

The majority of shoppers have been female, but the few male

shoppers that have come through like to see that they’re being included by 10 West catering to their apparel needs, especially with jeans and dress shirts.

“We try to have most of the guys’ stuff up toward the front, so that they can see it from the window,” Morgan said.

In addition to hopefully selling discounted clothes from other unisex brands such as Lululemon, Cheadle aspires to add products like perfume, body lotion and accessories in the future. But for now, she’s sticking to her guns: her philosophy of affordability.