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A Bit of Whimsy in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Nicole Jarotzky and her children at Whimsy.
Photo provided

well-known and small, creative, fashion designers

at a wide range of prices. "While I understand I cannot compete with Target, I do have some items in the lower price range, as well as the high end," she explained.

Entering the store, one first sees a seasonal display of accessories and clothing - now completely "Frozen" and including an "Elsa" tutu dress - that will change periodically. Every small rack holds different age groups, styles and brands, in a cheerful mosaic of colors, shapes and textures. "I have boys' clothes up to age 7, and for the girls I have clothing up to teens," said Jarotzky.

Brand names include Charlie Rocket, Splendid and Kissy Kissy; she also carries smaller, international stylists such as Bit'z Kids from Japan. Shoppers can find KicKee Pants' pajamas for boys and girls, made of bamboo, Petit Bateau underwear, adorable European fashions for girls from Catimini and Mayoral, and much more. "The clothes here are for school, not just for parties," said Jarotzky. "I consider Nordstrom to be my main competitor, but a lot of what we have here comes from less known, but not lesser, brands."

With a background in luxury fashion marketing - she worked for Chanel and Paco Rabanne - Jarotzky knows how to procure, choose and negotiate. She searched the big trade shows in Los Angeles, where the whole planet meets, to find brands that match her style. "This is what I have learned: to be successful, I need to present what I love, what I would choose for my own children."

The mezzanine of the store is dedicated to tween and teen girls - there they can try on clothing and wigs in their own space. Little ones have their own space, too, in the shape of a baby

"Whimsy" is the perfect name for the new children's store that opened Aug. 20 in the Lafayette Shopping Center on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. The store is the manifestation of Nicole Jarotzky's vision. The Burton Valley mom, who was raised in Orinda and created the very successful home/Internet business Fairies and Feathers - which caters to every little girl's wildest dreams of fabulous, fantasy tutu dresses - is now settling into a brick and mortar establishment while dramatically expanding her offerings to include creative, unique, yet sensibly priced clothing for boys and girls, as well as toys.

"I had to make a decision. Fairies and Feathers is getting to be bigger than I am. I have someone helping me to do the dresses now," said Jarotzky. "In order to continue to grow I would have to format the production, go the China route, and lose the uniqueness and quality control I have now." Jarotzky said that the idea of opening a shop had been on her back burner for a long time and she was just looking for the perfect place - one that was affordable for a new business, offered enough space, and would benefit from foot traffic. "Here I am, more local and more integrated with my community, which is important to me," she said.

In her new store at 3643 Mt. Diablo Blvd., a few doors down from Trader Joe's, Jarotzky sells children's clothing, toys and accessories from both

hut under the stairs where games and pillows await them.

The store also offers quality toys for parents and grandparents seeking non-electronic gifts such as stuffed animals - don't miss the adorable Maileg soft mouse family series - paper dolls, puzzles, pillows and blankets.

Fear not, young dreamers, for Fairies and Feathers lives on. The custom-made tutus have their own display in the store. "The tutu costumes are still a very big part of what I love doing," said the young mother, "but there is much more to see here than just the tutus."

Jarotzky is excited and at the same time a little scared with the opening of the store. For her it is a big risk, but she has put her whole heart and mind into it. There will be a grand opening celebration at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept.17. Jarotzky invites all curious people to stop by for refreshments, enjoy the party and discover what her shop has to offer.

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