



Northern Chicks

RACHELLE MCDANIEL
ADDS CLASS AND SASS
TO MILAN'S BUSINESS
MIX

Photos and Story by Phil Eich,
Storyville Social, as part of the
Michigan Main Street Story
Series

"The idea for Northern Chicks came five years ago when I popped up to Milan for one of its Third Thursday events. Milan Main Street had just started doing those, and I while I was there, I walked into a retail space that hadn't even been finished yet: no walls, just studs.

It was a blank canvas.

Everything in the community was compelling to me: the people, the environment. The downtown was like a hidden gem that just wanted to shine. I thought that if I was going to start a business, I wanted to open in a place that was also starting from the ground up—I didn't want to face the intense competition that comes in areas that are well-established.

So, I started as a vendor selling my goods at every Third Thursday event. People loved what I was doing, and I loved being a vendor. Then Jill Tewsley, the Milan Main Street Director, and Dave Snyder, a local developer, came to me and asked, 'How would you like to open a storefront?'

I did, and here I am five years later.

The Northern Chicks vibe is vintage home furnishings along with featuring local artists and gifts. I have a background in interior design and enjoy the home decor aspect of it, so I try to merge them both together here. That's our niche, and it's something I love and enjoy.

On the artists and gifts side, we try to keep things all local, handmade goods. It's mostly other small businesses that we are trying to support as a way to give back to the community.

When I opened Northern Chicks, I didn't know how much work was going to be involved. There's a lot of opportunity in starting a business in a place that isn't quite established yet, but it also means there's a lot more work involved.

But the people and the community here in Milan make it so worth it. You develop relationships. You get to know people and their family members. It starts being more than just a business and I didn't realize how deep the connection to the community would become.

At the end of the day, building those relationships is really what keeps your business going. Without that, I don't think a business can be successful. Opening a business with only a mindset of making money—it's going to be difficult. But developing relationships creates customers who are always coming back to say, 'I trust you. I know I can always come here and find what I need.'

—Rachelle McDaniel, Northern Chicks, Milan



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