

A Framer's Touch

What do license plates, kid's drawings, irrigation parts, and a baton twirler's uniform have in common? They can all be framed and turned into unique works of art. Kristen Ling, owner of A Framer's Touch in downtown Forest Grove for nearly 20 years, never knows what a customer will bring her next, but no matter what, she and her staff treat each like a family heirloom.

An Illinois native, Kristen set her sights on moving to the Pacific Northwest as a kid, after a cross-country drive with her aunt, who had landed a job at Pacific University in Forest Grove. "The smell, the visuals of Oregon...I was starstruck," she says. Later she brought her husband for a look and he had a similar reaction. "We were in the Columbia

River Gorge in the morning and at the beach in the afternoon. Where else can you do that?" Together the couple moved to Washington County two decades ago. He was employed, but Kristen, a former travel agent, was looking for something different. Her side business of photography had connected her to the framing profession, and she was smitten. As luck would have it, a Forest Grove framing shop soon came up for sale, and she jumped at the opportunity.

One of the best pieces of advice the former owners gave her, Kristen says, was to "immerse myself in the community...that was the key to success." And indeed, the tight-knit Forest Grove community and the relationships she has developed are what she credits for her success. "I love this community and my location downtown," she says. "It's one of the few remaining places where you can drop off your kids with a couple of bucks to buy ice cream, and know they will be safe."

An active and engaged business community is also a plus. As a member of the local chamber of commerce for over a decade, she values the opportunities for involvement in decisions affecting her business. And city officials almost always join group meetings – whether it's the chamber, the Forest Grove Tourism Advisory Committee, or other community groups. "That's pretty impressive," she says.

She is also impressed with the city's commitment to promoting tourism. Already ripe with tourism assets like nearby wineries and breweries, diverse restaurants, McMenamins Grand Lodge, the Valley Art Society gallery, historical society walking tours, and nearby recreation spots like Tillamook Forest and Hagg Lake, the city is working to leverage those for the maximum benefit of local businesses. "The city is very proactive in pursuing growth by building on its assets," Kristen says. "It feels good to be part of a progressive community."



At a glance

Equipped with state-of-the-art tools, and staffed with award-winning designers, A Framer's Touch caters to both private and commercial customers, providing personalized, out-of-the-box, and up-and-coming designs. "If a picture is worth a thousand words, then how you frame it tells the story," says the owner. "The combination of colors, shape, size and materials, skillfully balanced, makes the story interesting and gives you a one-of-a-kind design."

While custom framing is the heart of their business, the shop's gift gallery showcases the wares of some 200 local and domestic artists and vendors, ranging from original paintings to bath and body products and consumables. A Framer's Touch also boasts the largest selection of Old World Christmas ornaments in the Portland metro area. If you stop by the gallery in the months of November and December, you will be transported to a winter wonderland.

A FRAMER'S TOUCH

1920 21st Avenue
Forest Grove, OR 97116
tel. (503) 359.5109
www.aframerstouch.com



A place where businesses and families thrive.

For information about operating a business in Forest Grove, contact the City of Forest Grove Economic Development Department at 503.992.3293.