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Leominster SBA Business Spotlight: ECI Stores

By Kerry Castonguay

It was a unique solution to a family quandary: Lose a valued resource? Birth its replacement — and raise it to be one of the biggest and best around.

“When (my wife) Cassandra’s favorite consignment store in [Worcester](#) closed, she was left with no place to shop for our 4-month old daughter — and the idea for Cutie Patuties was born,” said Neil Abramson.

Thus the Abramsons co-founded ECI Stores in [Leominster](#) in 1998 with flagship boutique Cutie Patuties, which has grown to be New England’s largest children’s consignment store. With the addition of CP & Company, Cutiques ETC., and Q-Teens, ECI Stores has become a leading New England consignment retailer, offering gently used children’s clothing, teen fashion, ladies apparel, and home furnishings and décor.



The Abramsons were just 26 years of age when they opened Cutie Patuties in a small retail space in Leominster Plaza at **285 Central St.**, with Cassandra as president and Neil as chief financial officer. **Where's the story?**



6 Points Mentioned

“Cassandra went to Bentley for merchandising and marketing, and I went to Bentley for business, so we were well prepared for this venture,” explained Neil Abramson. “Cassandra would operate the store Tuesday through Saturday with our daughter in tow. I would go in early in the morning to prep the store for opening, then go off to my job as a retail consultant. We kept a tight budget, starting with a six-month lease. For our 10th wedding anniversary, we splurged and got a dumpster so we didn’t have to bring trash home

with us (anymore).”

In 2007, as Cutie Patuties moved to Johnny Appleseed Plaza at 1021 Central St., Neil left his full-time job in order to support the demands of their expanding business.

“It was scary leaving the corporate position,” he recalled. “We were giving up the perceived security of my salary and benefits — but now I would never go back.”

Neil Abramson focused on improving the customer and employee experience by finetuning procedures and integrating efficient processes. The Abramsons’ dedication has paid dividends: Cutie Patuties was named one of the Top 5 Consignment Stores Around Boston in 2014 by Boston Parents Paper and “Best Consignment Store” by the Leominster Champion and the Holden Landmark Reader’s Choice.

Cutiques was born in 2007 offering household furnishings and was expanded in 2011 at Johnny Appleseed Plaza, adding women’s clothing and accessories.

“Cassandra knew the merchandise, what was hot and what was not,” noted Abramson. “We focused on quality and selection, which is what we knew our customers were looking for. We added certain high-demand, highquality items such as the full line of **Melissa & Doug** toys. Everything we offer is screened through the Consumer Product Safety

Commission.”

Today, Cutie Patuties consigns children’s clothing, CP & Company resells women’s apparel and accessories, and Q-Teens offers designer-brand teen attire, all at Johnny Appleseed Plaza. Cutiques ETC. inventories a selection of consigned upscale home furnishings and décor at ECI Stores’ most recent expansion at 12 Manning Ave. in [Leominster](#). Select inventory from all their locations is available for purchase online at www.ecistores.com, with the inventory updated every 15 minutes.

“We have 10 full-time and 20 part-time employees; many have been with us for over 10 years. We want to attract and retain quality people — that’s what it’s about. That’s why we offer very competitive compensation and group benefits,” says Abramson.

The Abramsons and ECI Stores are committed to serving their community. Neil Abramson is a member and vice president of the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops (NARTS), and shares his knowledge with other professionals at speaking engagements throughout the year. ECI Stores is a member of the Leominster Small Business Association and the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. Passionate about reading, the Abramsons help support the [Leominster Public Library](#).

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