



# K&H Custom Window Treatments

By Mauri A. Rapp

In 1986, Sandra Kuhns, mother of a young daughter, and her mother, Norma Heller, took \$500 of their own money to begin an in-home custom window treatment business. Nearly 23 years later, Kuhns has turned K & H Custom Window Treatments into a multi-million dollar company with 14 employees.

Originally employed as an accountant for Air Products and Chemicals in Allentown, Kuhns wanted to find a way to stay at home with her daughter yet still earn a living. She and her mother first got the idea for K & H Custom Window Treatments – which was originally named K & H Window Works – because they had often helped Kuhns’ father, Donald, with his own work. In her home sewing room, Norma, with assistance from

Sandra, sewed privacy curtains for the company Mr. Heller worked for in Allentown, which made tracks for privacy curtains and theater stages. Soon, Kuhns and Heller had their first commercial job furnishing and installing blinds at the Hillside School in Macungie. Now, K & H provides not only privacy and stage curtains but also rigging, motors and tracks, and television studio curtains. Their commercial business has also expanded to include blinds and shades, projection screens, and custom fabric treatments.

K & H Custom Window Treatments can be seen at many businesses in not only the Lehigh Valley, but also in Harrisburg, Scranton, and Philadelphia. Some more

notable customers include the Crayola Factory in Easton and Lehigh University in Bethlehem. K & H also designed custom shades for Christmas at PPL’s headquarters in Allentown. The business caters to residential customers, as well. Kuhns began building her customer base by word-of-mouth, expanding that base to more than 1000 residential customers in the Lehigh Valley. According to Kuhns, the service her customers receive is what makes a small business like hers so special. “Give clients what they need to help them solve their problems. That’s what we try to do every day,” Kuhns says of her business philosophy, “I think the world is so busy these days that people aren’t used to good customer service anymore.”

As an example of K&H’s emphasis on customer service, Kuhns tells of a customer last year who had placed an order through a local furniture company. The customer never received her order and was not getting any satisfaction from that particular company when Kuhns finally stepped in. She immediately contacted suppliers, obtained the fabric that the customer needed and made window treatments for the customer as well. While redecorating, Kuhns also noticed that the living room chairs could use an extra touch, so she made two red pillows that matched the décor perfectly. “I walked up to her and gave her the

– Continued on page 12

*“I’d rather buy poorly made furniture that I’ll have to replace in a few years.”*

It doesn’t make sense to us either.

## STICKLEY.



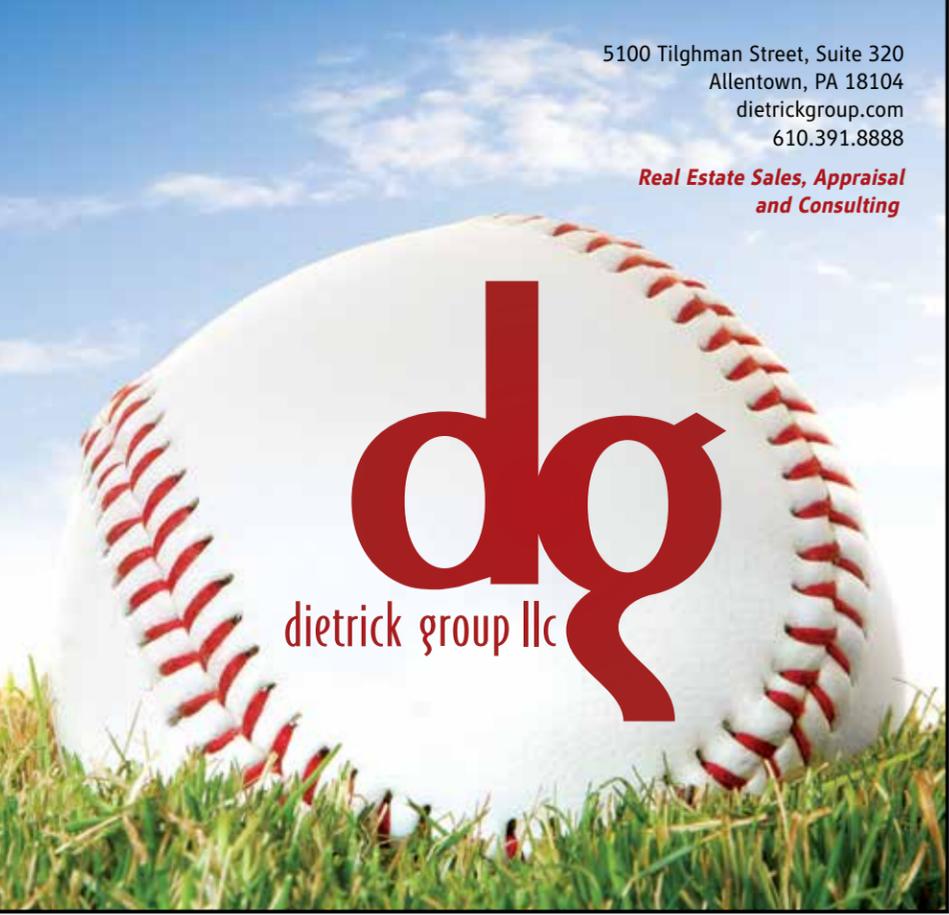
Furniture of Stickley’s uncompromising quality is always the best investment.



Open Tues.-Sat. 10am to 5pm and Sun. 1pm to 5pm  
 BUCKS COUNTY • Rt. 263 Furlong • 215•794•7325  
 LEHIGH VALLEY • Rt. 29/100 • 610•967•0699  
[www.hendrixsonsfurniture.com](http://www.hendrixsonsfurniture.com)

5100 Tilghman Street, Suite 320  
Allentown, PA 18104  
dietrickgroup.com  
610.391.8888

**Real Estate Sales, Appraisal  
and Consulting**



**dg**  
dietrick group llc

## PRIDE OF PLACE cont'd

pillows, and she actually got tears in her eyes," Kuhns explains. "She was so taken aback that we went the extra mile for her."

When reflecting on the process of developing her business, Kuhns says, "It's been a long road." Along the way Kuhns has encountered her share of obstacles. Being a female business owner in a predominately male business has been one of her larger obstacles. Kuhns struggled with finding respect in the early years from the general contractors she dealt with. However, her professionalism carried her until her colleagues finally began looking past her gender and instead looked at her experience and expertise. "I just got off the phone with someone at a construction site, and the conversation I had with him today was much different than a conversation I might have had 20 years ago," Kuhns explains.

Another struggle Kuhns has overcome is finding the right employees. "I know how I want things to be done and I want to find people that will do it that way," she explains. "You want to find people who are going to share that vision with you and treat the customers the way they should be treated." To find some of her employees, she has had to look no further than her own family tree. Kuhns' brothers, Craig and Mark Heller, part owners instrumental in K&H's long-term growth, joined the company in 1990 and 1995 respectively. Two of her nephews, Drew Heller and Mark Heller Jr., also work for the same company that she started more than two decades ago with her mother, who has since passed away, making K & H a multi-generational business. Lauren Ritter, Office Manager at K & H Custom Window Treatments, says that Kuhns' "family first" philosophy extends beyond blood relatives to include her employees. "Last summer I had kidney cancer and one of our installers broke both his feet from a non-work related fall," Ritter shares. "I was out for six weeks and Dave was out for 7 months. Sandy continued our health benefits, paying not only the employer's portion but the employee portion as well." Ritter says that the company also held a yard sale to help both employees with medical costs and lost wages. "She is a talented, professional businesswoman with

a compassionate and generous heart," Ritter says.

This emphasis on family is something Kuhns also impresses upon her two daughters, Lauren, a graduate of Moravian College with a degree in education, and Alyssa, who studies architecture at Carnegie Mellon University. Although she admits that she would like to see the family business carried on by at least one of her daughters, she supports their independence and sees in them the type of work ethic she has displayed. She also says that her daughters' involvement in her company may have contributed to Alyssa's decision to pursue a career in architecture. "I do business with architects all the time, so maybe Alyssa will take K & H in a totally different direction someday," she says hopefully.

With a thriving business that has doubled in the past four years alone, it's easy to see why Kuhns' friends often tell her that she is an inspiration for women in the business world. Still, she is reluctant to call herself a role model for other female business owners. "I don't consider myself to be a role model, but I hope that someone might think of me in that way," she says. She does, however, offer advice for other up-and-coming business owners, especially women who want to start their own business. "Get the education and experience you need, and have a business plan," she advises. "Most importantly, surround yourself with good mentors. Anyone, male or female, can do it if they set their mind to it." ■

## K&H Custom Window Treatments

1110 Trexlertown Road  
Trexlertown, PA 18087  
610-481-9005  
[www.kuhnsandheller.com](http://www.kuhnsandheller.com)

## WE MAKE HOMES BEAUTIFUL

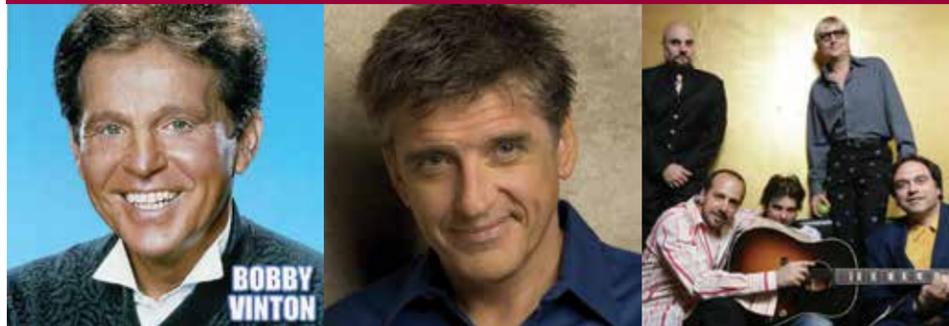


Custom Window Treatments | Shades, Blinds & Shutters  
Custom Bedding & Pillows | Upholstery | Home Decorating Accessories  
In-home Consultations | Interior Design | Professional Installation

**K&H Custom Window Treatments**

610-481-9005 | 1110 Trexlertown Road, Trexlertown | [www.kuhnsandheller.com](http://www.kuhnsandheller.com)

## EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCES!



### BOBBY VINTON

Fri., June 6  
8 PM \$40/\$35  
Promotional Sponsor  
WAEB AM/Oldies Online

### CRAIG FERGUSON

Host of Late, Late Show  
Sat., June 28  
8 PM \$36/\$31

**State Theatre**

[www.statetheatre.org](http://www.statetheatre.org)

### THE FAB FAUX

A tribute to the Music of The Beatles  
TWO TOTALLY DIFFERENT SHOWS!

Sat., July 19  
6 PM & 9 PM

\$49 per show or \$93 combo ticket,  
with the same seats for both nights!  
(Combo seats based on availability.)  
Sponsored by Tribune Direct and  
99.9 The Hawk  
Promotional Sponsor WFMZ Channel 69

453 Northampton St., Easton, PA 610-252-3132 • 1-800-999-STATE  
24-hour charge 610-991-STATE Order on line at [www.statetheatre.org](http://www.statetheatre.org)

**the gallery**

## EXTRAORDINARY ART!

FREDDY© Photo Exhibit  
Wilson Black & Tom Kosa - Open 90 min. prior to performances

MAKE YOUR EVENT A  
**MEMORABLE**  
Celebration



Reserve your date now and take advantage of our introductory prices!

The **ARCHITECTS GOLF CLUB**  
Distinction By Design

**THYME**  
RESTAURANT & BAR

We specialize in Exclusive Weddings, Bridal Showers, Elegant Champagne Brunches and more.  
Call today to speak to an event specialist.

908.213.3080 | 700 Strykers Road | Lopatcong, NJ 08865 | [www.thearchitectsclub.com](http://www.thearchitectsclub.com)