The second I sat down with Sue Friedman of Friedman's Department Store to talk with her about her family's long-time Northside business her cell phone rang, she glanced at the number and picked up the call, signaling to me it would just be a moment. I figured it was business but as soon as I heard Sue reply, Size 13, right, I correctly assumed it was a NFL player. Since the 90's Friedman's has become the go-to shoe store for several pro-athletes. Friedman's customer focused and friendly service draws individuals, families, and sports stars from across the country into North Minneapolis to buy shoes.

Friedman's Department Store located at 400 W. Broadway Ave in 1928, they are one of the oldest family owned businesses on the West Broadway corridor. David and Sue Friedman currently own and operate the shop. David's Grandfather was the original owner; he originally opened in 1898 and was located on W. Broadway where HWY 94 currently sits.

Over the years Friedman's have adapted and changed their business to fit in with the current trends and niche business opportunities. When Friedman's opened in 1898, they were a department store focused on men's working wear, dress shoes and apparel, in the 1940's they expanded to also include children's, women apparel, linens and towels in order to outfit women and children on Temporary Aid to Needy Families-TANF. By the 1970's Friedman's was a family focused store from children to the grandparents. In the 70's and 80's Friedman's began to sell more athletic shoes and hip hop apparel. However, within the last five years and the changing demographics on the Northside Friedman's has refocused and are all about catering to families. They still have all the unique sneakers you may desire and converse in every color,

and yet, they carry a greater variety of children's, women's, and men's shoes and athletic wear and men's dress shoes.

Friedman's started outfitting pro-athletes back in the late 90's. "I remember it like it was yesterday," Sue said. "Michael Bennett came in the store on a Friday afternoon and Marc," the Friedman's youngest son, "whispered 'that is Michael Bennett the running back for the Vikings,' he was looking for a pair of shoes and he needed by the next day. I found the shoes; called Nike to overnight express them and Bennett got his shoes. That is how it all started." The thing about Sue's philosophy, it doesn't matter if you are playing football for the Viking, Packers, North High, or in the backyard with your neighborhoods she is going to give you the same excellent service and that is how you keep a business open for a century.

A New Outlook

When asked about the future of Friedman and retiring, Sue exclaimed, "I love Broadway, love my customers, and I love working in this area." Sue and David have been getting a lot of accolades lately from customers and neighborhood residents. They are in the process of updating their storefront by adding new windows, art, lighting, and signage with the help of a grant from the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition funded though the City of Minneapolis, and the Northside Funders Collaborative. Since the improvements started there have been an "unbelievable amount of new faces in the store" Sue glows with joy every time she talks about the new windows. "It is the best thing we have ever done," the store is serving more and more families and they are getting more walk-in traffic. With their new look, "people are stopping in that say they have been driven by for over years and they thought we were closed all these years."

Sue was born in North Minneapolis in 1955 and started working in the store in the mid-70's when she married David. She has seen major transformations in the neighborhood in her lifetime from the riots during the 60's, drug and gangs of the 70's and 80's. Sue described the major transformation going on from within the neighborhood. "The 80's were real fast lot of drugs and lots of drug money on Broadway," but things have changed, "Broadway is coming back really strong, there are new businesses and retail shores moving in, the Minneapolis School District Headquarters is coming to Broadway, and neighborhood groups like Hawthorne Neighborhood and West Broadway working together." Sue pointed out the perception issues many often point to when talking about when attracting customers and recruiting new businesses to Broadway Avenue, "the media paints Broadway as a drug infested, prostitution infested, murder infested area." Sue exclaimed, "That is not true, that is not the Northside. Crime happens everywhere and there is a lot of good happening on Broadway and on the Northside but the media chooses to focus on the negative and there is lots of positive happening here."

Sue thinks Broadway is on it's way to becoming more family oriented. "I see Broadway becoming more pedestrian friendly, that is my biggest thing, I want to walk down Broadway go to the dry cleaner and have a meal at a sit down restaurant… not fancy fancy but family oriented places with good service."

Giving Back to the Community

In addition to providing Northside residents with shoes and apparel for nearly a century, the Friedman's are also focused on giving back to the community. Sue is on the Hawthorne Neighborhood Council Board and is Co-chair of the Business Committee.

Bi-annually the Friedman's team up with a variety of sponsors and foundations including Villa Fonda Foundation and EJ Henderson to do shoe and winter boot giveaways for Northside youth. These events are very popular and with the help of a couple volunteers and staff, David and Sue measure and provide footwear for over 200 kids in need from Ascension Church and the Hawthorne Neighborhood.

Sue's latest philanthropic endeavor is the Hawthorne Community Garden for Kids. Sue's idea is to teach Northside youth to grow their own food, merchandize, and sell what they grow at the W. Broadway Farmers Market this summer. Sue has identified three neighborhood plots for the garden and has successfully secured seed donations and volunteers to help with the project. Youth of any age can get involved in an upcoming series of three workshops hosted by Sue and her partners. The first workshop is March 7th at New Bethel Baptist Church from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. The first three workshops include: education on composting, growing a seedling, and creating rain barrels. Those who want to get involved can reach Sue at 612-382-0877 or frieds ue@hotmail.com
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