

Photos by Travis Anderson

Top row: Alyssa and Tom Jacobson

Middle: Michael McDermott, Jason Merritt, Tracy Fiebiger, Cindi Kranz and Bob Zagaros

Seated: Rick Fiebiger, Jeremy Swanson



MINDING THEIR OWN BUSINESS

OWNING SMALL, THINKING BIG

You love their shops, but do you know the person behind the brand? Meet these small business owners who live and breathe their business and bring life to The Shops at West End.

By Sarah Howard

Being a small business owner comes with many challenges: Start-up costs, inventory, hiring staff, brand-building . . . the list goes on. For small business owners at The Shops at West End, the hard work is worth it. “It is an incredible feeling to see your vision evolve on a daily basis,” said Alyssa Jacobson, owner and chief inspirational officer of [solidcore] MSP. “I love that I wear so many hats,” said Rick Fiebiger, owner of phresh spa salon.

For these store and franchise owners — who own only one or two locations — The Shops at West End has provided an oasis of both engaged customers and a hotspot location. “We have a large group of frequent [customers],” said Christine Frandsen, owner of Forever Yogurt. “It’s fun getting to know them all.”

Here, we take a moment to appreciate those who keep our favorite stores running and our favorite products coming.

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Alyssa Jacobson, owner and chief inspirational officer of [solidcore]



Michael McDermott

Jason Merritt

ROJO MEXICAN GRILL

For Michael McDermott, owning restaurants is not only his passion, it’s in his blood: his father founded both Chi-Chi’s (named after McDermott’s mother) and Fuddruckers. “I always thought I’d work in restaurants in some capacity,” he said. “I always had it in the back of my head.”

So in the 1990s, McDermott opened Kona Grill, a steak and sushi chain that grew to 23 locations nationwide. After going public and being bought out, McDermott moved his sights to a new restaurant concept: Rojo.

McDermott, and business partner Jason Merritt, oversaw the concept and menu for Rojo, and its first location opened at the West End in 2010, with a second location opening in 2013 at Southdale Center in Edina.

At the West End, McDermott has seen his business flourish. “Everything [at West End] just compliments our business,” he said. “When we go into projects, we look for good synergy and a good destination—the West End has both.”

With Rojo booming, McDermott continues to create restaurant concepts. Most recently he opened Ling & Louie’s on Nicollet Mall and plans to open sushi bar Shag in the North Loop in early 2015. “I’m always doing different things,” McDermott says of his restaurant concepts. “I love to create something and absolutely love what I do.”

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