



See yourself in Ames, see yourself on Main Street!

When downtown business owner Kinsey Meyer came to Ames to attend Iowa State University she never intended to stay here. But fate had other plans for this young entrepreneur who had her eye on a degree and a life in the Pacific Northwest.

“I started working at Miss Meyer’s, a consignment clothing boutique, in January of 2013, my fourth year at Iowa State,” said Meyer. “A coworker of mine had told me Miss Meyer’s was hiring, so I went in, introduced myself, met some of the coworkers, and got the job.”

Little did she know that her part-time position would turn into her life’s work. By early 2014 Meyer had her immediate future mapped out. She had applied for and received a job in Idaho, had an apartment lined up there, and was ready to move.

“A month before I graduated I received an email from the company stating that they were undergoing some financial stresses and were filing for bankruptcy,” said Meyer. “This meant my position, as well as a few hundred others, was no longer needed.”

About this same time the owner of the Ames Main Street Cultural District business where Kinsey worked, was expecting her second child and ready to be a stay-at-home mom. She offered the opportunity to buy the store to her employee with the same last name. After mulling it over for about a month and talking to a banker, Miss Meyer was ready to bite the bullet and become the owner of Miss Meyer’s. The store became hers in August of 2014.

“Taking ownership of Miss Meyer’s right out of college really forced me to put my priorities into check,” Meyer said. “Owning a business is extremely different than working a typical full-time job. It is a full-time job and then some.”

Getting Iowa State University graduates to stay in Ames has been a top priority of the Ames Chamber of Commerce with its “See Yourself in Ames” internship program. With the booming economy in Ames and rapid business expansion, keeping the talent set of new graduates in Ames has become increasingly important.

“Kinsey’s story is a great example of why we work to showcase opportunities to young people interning in Ames and Story County,” Dan Culhane, president and CEO of the Ames Chamber of Commerce said. “There are opportunities everywhere and it is our job to help them be aware that there are meaningful employment and business ownership opportunities right here.”

Meyer says the hardest part of owning a business right out of college is that it can be a huge anchor. Most college graduates find an entry-level job that they work for a year or two to get that experience and then move on to something that they really enjoy.

“I am extremely lucky that I love what I do, but if I ever just wanted to pick up and leave, that is not an option,” Meyer said. “As a business owner, I work almost every day, if not every day.”

Meyer has now lived in Ames for six years, loves the community, and sees herself in Ames for many years to come. She volunteers her time for the Ames Main Street Cultural District and is particularly glad that her opportunity came in the historic downtown area.

“We are really lucky to have so many great businesses in a booming downtown area,” Meyer said. “I am fortunate to know many of the business owners and to be able to run ideas by them to get their opinions. We are all rooting for each other, and I think having that kind of support is great.”

Miss Meyer’s is located at 432 5th Street in historic downtown Ames. Ames has been a Main Street community since 2009.