

# Stepping out on faith and passion

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Susan Semmelmann spent 23 years in the industry and around 18 years as a partner in Grandeur Design, including a stint in a Foch Street location, until she decided it was time to strike out on her own.

Later this year she'll be opening Susan Semmelmann Interiors in an approximately 10,000 square-foot building Vickery Investment Partners is building at 4374 Vickery Blvd. She'll occupy about a quarter of it. The builder is Mark Anderson of ADC.

It might seem counter-intuitive to leave the hot Seventh Street scene for Vickery, but Semmelmann has a clear explanation.

"Vickery is the perfect location because it is centrally located between the new Clearfork area and the university shopping area," she says, and those are likely the most popular places for her clients.

She wanted out of retail to concentrate on something she learned from her mother-in-law – interior design,

"I have about 18 projects right now," Semmelmann says. "We are really in the high-end market of construction. We do a lot of construction detailing and we do full service design."

Construction detailing means working with a builder or a home owner on all of the finishes in the house from their countertops to their paint to their tile to doing computer assisted design and sketches "to be able to communicate to the builder exactly what it's going to look like," she said.

"We are very strong in the technology world of design with our software programs to be able to give the visual to our clients," Semmelmann said.



Susan Semmelmann launches new design company.

The Semmelmanns live in Decatur now – that's where the business started and where she has a workroom for custom drapery and bedding, but they have bought a lot in

Four Oaks and will build there as soon as her son – a senior – finishes high school.

They also have a daughter who is a senior at Baylor University and another who

is a junior at Texas Christian University.

Her father was a football coach and her mother a school teacher growing up and they moved around to

different small towns. But her parents were TCU grads, and that's where they wanted her to go to college. She graduated in 1990 with a teaching degree.

Her daughter is the 16th person in her family to attend TCU, so she feels strong connections to both the university and to Fort Worth.

She did her student teaching at J.P. Stevens in Fort Worth, a 22-year-old with a class of 21 7-year-olds, and, she says, quickly figured out that that was not something she wanted to do.

Semmelmann moved to New York where she was a flight attendant for American Airlines, then to Dallas where she met her husband and the fledgling launch of her design career.

Marc Semmelmann wanted to build homes.

"His mother was an interior designer and an architect. I loved what she did and I just gravitated to her and her knowledge base," she said. "Marc and I jumped in it together. We started building homes. I started designing."

Her mother-in-law "showed me the ropes from fabrics to yardage to the work room to colors and palettes to vendor lines et cetera," Semmelmann said.

She describes her husband as a jack of all trades.

"He does so many different things, but his main primary business is medical billing for orthopedics and deals in the workers comp world and then he's an investor in restaurants and he flies for Raquel's Wings for Life," Semmelmann said "It's a charity that's really special and we're really passionate about this. Marc is actually public speaking on his story. He had bone cancer in 2010. He is the only survivor in the world of his type of cancer."

The Wise County non-profit is named in memory of Raquel Riveron who died in 2005 and exists to "alleviate the financial burden and time consumption of traveling from the patient's home to the medical treatment facilities of their choice that are otherwise not available to them locally," the organization said on its website. "We've taken over 300 flights since 2007."

During Marc's battle against cancer, she was running Grandeur Design my job but had to take over his business for a couple of years with three children that didn't drive.

"Raquel's Wings for Life was very gracious to me, to be able to fly me back and forth, and to see my husband in MD Anderson during that two-year time of treatment," Semmelmann said. "When Marc got well, he learned

to fly and now has three airplanes he has donated to the fleet. There are four to five pilots and they weekly fly cancer patients back and forth to MD Anderson.

"And he's paying it back," she said.

Stepping out on her own has given her the freedom to be able to give back to the community and be able to be involved with charity events and giving more where she can, Semmelmann said.

"I am not going to be a retailer. I will have a showroom and we will be merchandising on the floor. However, our business model is going to be full interior with our design team," she said. "So even though we are able to carry all the lines that we did in the retail side, we've taken one step further to offer even more lines through the design process."

It's not about the sale, she says. It's about doing something you love. It is about giving every day to something that you want to give.

One special charity to her is a Wish with Wings, a local non-profit that for more than 35 years has been granting wishes to Texas children fighting life-threatening medical conditions.

"I'm on the decorating committee and I have had more fun with their events and just being a part of their team," she says.

Add in that Marc Semmelmann flies for Raquel's Wings for Life, and people refer to them as "the wing people."


People call her a workaholic, she says, but it's not work because she is passionate about what she does.

"And it is nonstop for me. It is seven days a week. I have no problem with getting up at 4:30 in the morning and going to bed at midnight because I love what I do," Semmelmann said. "I am in overload right now, and I just try to keep up so I want to be on top of it, because I as a business woman and running my own company I want to make sure I run a very efficient business."

The change was scary.

"I was scared because I didn't have one job. You know, we always have fear of what the unknown was. When I went out on my own, within matter of days, God blessed my business with just abundance of clients and sales and they came from friends who wanted to refer them, or people that knew someone that I knew," she said.

That was confirmation, she said, that it was the right time and the right decision.





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