



“STRONG BEAUTIFUL YOU”

“Strong Beautiful You” - This tagline captures the vision behind Tara Manzke’s clothing retail business, which opened in 2017 in downtown Stevens Point. Tara wanted to make a real difference, and since she personally recognized how it felt to struggle with issues of confidence, she knew apparel from Bria Bella & Co. needed to create comfort and self-assurance in all types of women.

The idea began as one of simple online retail; however, when Tara met Mary Wescott of University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Small Business Development Center, that all changed! Mary knew of a local woman retiring and suggested Tara acquire some of the clothing racks and other materials from Dala’s Import Oasis, the business scheduled to close. But when the two discovered the location itself at 925 Main Street was available for rent, Tara’s idea took a new form.



Photo credit: Splendid Photography by Serena

Tara Manzke of Bella Bria & Co. offers confidence in style to customers!

OPENING FOR BUSINESS

Tara signed a lease on the storefront May 17 and, on Mary’s advice, opened June 1. In those two short weeks, renovations happened quickly. The physical work involved removing carpet and shelving, repairing and repainting walls, overhauling dressing rooms, and installing hardwood floors and new furniture. Then attention turned to a point of sale system as well as accounting and marketing resources. Tara said the most valuable help she received from the SBDC was “Mary’s vast knowledge of resources and her ability to successfully prioritize seemingly countless elements.”

Mary worked with Tim Krause, professor of web and media design, and a capstone class team at UW- Stevens Point to facilitate the design and build of the ecommerce website. Tara said the team of senior students from the college was amazing as they were able to take her concept and, through novel ideas and suggestions, make it a functional reality.

MARKETING THE MESSAGE

Mary also provided additional help in creating a market assessment and developing a marketing strategy. One of the biggest surprises to Tara during the course of opening the business was to be mindful of loyal customers of the business that was closing. With Mary’s help and use of social media resources, Tara was able to introduce her new business to the public in a way that respected the shoppers of Stevens Point and did not just “erase” the decades of success of Dala’s Import Oasis.

Another element of marketing happened with Style on Main, a runway fashion show featuring a 30-foot raised stage set up on Main Street right outside the store. On July 22, during a Discover Downtown event, 14 local models of all shapes and sizes conducted a showing of over 500 pieces of new inventory at Bria Bella & Co. Tara hopes to continue this marketing tactic by hosting two fashion shows annually and holding scheduled photo shoots with local models at least once per month.

FULFILLING THE MISSION

The company has been wildly successful since its opening, and part of the reason is that Tara stays true to her vision. She considers how each person’s day could be positively impacted by apparel. Traci Peters-Graziano, a customer of Bella Bria & Co, said, “Tara is a class A business owner and ‘personal stylist.’ She was right there, giving advice and offering suggestions for things to try - and it made me feel appreciated and respected as a client.” Tara prides herself on finding pieces that truly make women feel strong and beautiful!

BRIA BELLA & CO.

Accomplishments with the SBDC of UW-Stevens Point:

- Marketing advice
- Social media marketing
- Start-up resources
- Retail location establishment

“The business would not be here without Mary and the SBDC!”

– Tara Manzke