

Retail notebook: Flower Basket has plenty of Valentine's ideas

By Margaret Fisher / Staff writer

Published: Thursday, February 6, 2014 at 19:14 PM.

As far back as he can remember, Tim Warren loved yard work — especially planting flowers and watching them pop up in the spring.

“As they bloomed I would pick them and make arrangements for my mom and the surrounding neighbors,” he said. “I just had a knack for it.”

Today, Warren owns The Flower Basket, a full-service floral shop at Parkview Shopping Center, founded by Chuck and Sally Plowman around 1979.

After years of watching a local florist at work, Warren left the Robersonville farm where he grew up. Eventually, in 1980, he headed for Kinston to work at the former Randolph's Florist on Vernon Avenue, learning the basics and staying about five years.

He began freelancing his floral skills locally and then worked at Rider Florist for more than two years. Working in the floral industry, he got to know Jean Foscue, a designer at The Flower Basket. When she purchased the shop, she hired Warren as the manager.

He managed the store for four years until Foscue retired in 1992 and sold it to him.

With 34 years of floral business experience, Warren said his career keeps him busy.

“It's one business that's very demanding,” he said.

Next week will be the second-busiest flower season — Valentine's Day, second to Christmas and closely followed by Mothers' Day.

The shop — with three designers, including Warren — will be fully stocked with ready-made fresh and silk flower arrangements for the holiday, and customers can also custom-order bouquets. Specials will be offered for \$10 and up.

The store carries a variety of home decor and gifts, such as stuffed animals and chocolates, and even offers home decorating. They provide world-wide service and local delivery. Warren said there is a 100 percent guarantee.

“My goal has always been not to send anything out I wouldn't want to receive myself,” he said.

The Flower Basket, 1312 N. Queen St., is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m.-noon on Saturdays. For information, call 252-523-1161.

Carolina Wild of Pink Hill has been selected to participate this spring in the new Entrepreneur Technical Assistance Program at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at UNC-Chapel Hill.

E-TAP matches a student enrolled in a masters of business administration program with a company to work together. Students apply and are selected for the paid position based on prior work experience and a passion for entrepreneurship. At the end of the work period, the student prepares a talk or paper detailing his or her work.



The goal is for the pilot program to serve as a jumpstart for start-up companies and existing businesses that are expanding and revitalizing economically distressed communities within the state, according to the program information.

The student selected for the spring semester is Ashwini Rathi, who is an architect from India, said Dennis Tracz, Carolina Wild CEO and founder.

"He previously built a project for the king of Saudi Arabia and the Defense Ministry of Qatar," he said about the 27-year-old student.

Coming from a family of entrepreneurs, Rathi worked for an architectural firm in Pune, India, overseeing a 300,000-square-foot construction site for a women's university in his first year and acting as the sole point of contact for seven global stakeholders, including the king of Saudi Arabia's office.

He will be working on various projects for Carolina Wild, which anticipates bottling muscadine juice in March and taking orders the third week of February, Tracz said.

"(Rashi) is going to implement our program with Amazon.com," he said.

One project involves promoting chefs and their recipes on the Web, and another will get Carolina Wild juice up for sale on Amazon.com, where Rashi will be working this summer, Tracz said.

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Do you have a new retail business or one that's undergone a significant change? The Free Press would like to hear about it. Contact Margaret Fisher at 252-559-1082 or Margaret.Fisher@Kinston.com.

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