

# From the Heart: specialty gifts with a special feeling

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It doesn't take long for shoppers to figure out they're in an extraordinary place when they enter From the Heart, Scotts Valley's popular specialty gift store tucked in the Kings Village shopping center.

Walking in the front door, store patrons are immediately aware of the aromas and colorful displays that give From the Heart its unique feeling.

"It is a special place," owner Laura Garcia said. "It's really the feel of the store (that attracts customers). The ambiance of it. The smells. And, the helpfulness of our staff is a big part of it, too. We're not pushy and that's very much a part of the store's ambiance. It's a nice place to shop, very relaxing."

Since Laura and her husband Rick purchased From the Heart a few years ago, she has been working to put her personal stamp on the popular store, which was originally founded in 1983.

"I've been trying to put my name on it," Laura said. "The store has my signature now."

She said the store has focused on both drawing a younger clientele and bringing the older, established customers back, and has succeeded on both counts.

"People are getting more comfortable with the store and getting used to it again," she said. "This is a destination store, and it has a following that has been built up over the years. A lot of our customers like it because it's more open and has more variety."

From the Heart specializes in a range of fine goods, including everything from gift baskets to antique furniture and gourmet food to bath and personal products.

And, everything is laid out in a unique, decorative style that pays homage to the current season. For instance, a current display is built around Mr. McGregor's Garden, the



*From the heart*

FINE GIFTS

popular children's classic tale that reflects the spring season. The store's colorful displays are one of its major drawing cards, Garcia said, and are built around "vignettes of color and scheme" that encourage customers to shop according to their desired theme.

From the Heart has been focusing considerable effort on its specialized gift baskets, which the store offers year-round. These can include a shower basket, filled with items from the store's baby department, or a bath and personal products basket, full of various offerings from the store's specialty collection of European lotions and bath salts, bath caviar, Camille Beckman products and other items. From the Heart staffers will help customers design a gift basket according to their theme or occasion, and their budget.

Laura is also particularly proud of the store's high-quality silk flowers and plants. The store also offers custom silk floral arrangements for any style or occasion.



(Left to right): Michele Jones, Jerryne Miller, Ginger Silva, Laura Garcia and Benita Walters. Not pictured: Jennifer Springer.

An entire section of the store is devoted to a showroom that features fine circa-1900 American Oak classic antique furniture offered by Felton-based O.J.'s American Antiques, produced by Beryl and Connie O'Brien, as well as Fred Miller's Antiques. The furniture has also proved very popular with the store's customers.

The store also offers an assortment of home décor items, including tapestries, wall sconces and hangings, lamps, candles and other beautiful gifts for the home.

From the Heart also prides itself on its selection of gourmet foods, ranging from dipping oils and balsamics to Double Devonshire and clotted cream imported from England, and dishware, which includes a brand new design each month.

From the Heart also offers a large selection of angels year-round.

In addition to its vast array of gift items and specialty products, From the Heart also offers home decorating and organizing classes, taught by store employee and designer Vanita Walters. A veteran consultant, Walters is also a

valuable resource for the store's customers who might appreciate a hand in demonstrating how a particular item or group of items could be used as a home decoration.

And, the classes are just the tip of the iceberg regarding the store's interaction with the community.

From the Heart and the Garcias have made a point of getting involved with promoting a variety of community activities and causes, including Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley schools fundraisers, Chamber of Commerce events, and other local charitable organization events. Garcia said From the Heart donates its planning, organizing and decorating services for various local events. After spending years in engineering project management, Laura said operating From the Heart has offered her an invaluable opportunity to both pursue a creative endeavor and have the time to devote to community causes.

"This is really where I want to be, in a creative field," she said.

"And, I also have the chance to get more involved in my community as a result."

*How to find us:*

**From the Heart**

*An upscale specialty gift store*

**230 Mt. Hermon Road**

(in the Kings Village shopping center near the theater)

**Scotts Valley, California**

*Owner/operators:*

**Laura and Rick Garcia**

**831-438-8442**