



Featured Friday!

By: Amberleigh Jewart

The Welcoming Project

March 14, 2014

Anyone who has driven down Main St. here in Norman has probably noticed the amazing store front of the Spirit Shop. The Spirit Shop has been around since 1976, making it the oldest in Norman. Current owner, Matt Sterr, has been there since about 2001. Before that, his father Joe ran a grocery store and worked with the Spirit Shop, so business has been part of Matt's whole life.

When I asked him what made him, or more so his family, get into the liquor store business he said that because he family had a background with the grocery store, it was an easy thing. It was the same principle of bringing in products for the customers. Their product just happened to be liquor.



He also went on to say that part of what also drives him to continue his work is his passion and appreciation for fine wines. Those involved in the Spirit Shop realized that there was not a huge wine community in Norman, which left very few options. In fact not only is the Spirit Shop the oldest shops in Norman, but it was also one of the very first shops to put an emphasis on fine wines, and actually worked towards educating the public on them as well. This has led to many loyal customers. They even have some that drive all the way from Dallas and Kansas City just to buy from them.



As a store that prides itself as being part of the fine wine industry, Matt samples every product as a way to maintain quality control, before making the decision to put it on his shelves. He says that he tastes roughly three thousand different wines each year. I asked what his favorite was and he said that it all depended on the day you asked him, as it changes often.



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Last year the Spirit Shop did a \$1 million renovation of the store. They doubled their square footage, and added that amazing steel piece above their store entrance. If you have yet to see it in person, I assure you it is quite spectacular and makes quite an impression on you as you walk inside.



Towards the end of our interview I asked Matt why their store decided that they wanted to be part of The Welcoming Project and he responded that even though he tends to avoid the political world, he saw this issue and not something political, but as more of a human rights issue and an issue rooted in equality. He also mentioned that he has LGBTQ customers and he felt it was important to support them as much as any other customer.

An interesting story that I would like to add in regards to the Spirit Shop and their support of our project goes back to our mobilization day last October where we went out and talked to businesses about our project. I was lucky enough to be one of the members who talked with the Spirit Shop. We explained what we do and the individual working the front said that he would pass it along to Matt, and the other individual at the counter next to him then said something that will stay with me for my whole life. He said, "Things like this is what gives me faith in humanity." It was heartwarming knowing that someone felt so moved by our project and just made it that much more rewarding.



As someone who has just ventured into the world of wine, I am still trying out different types of wine to find ones I like. While looking through the store I did stumble upon my current favorite, Land Run, and was overwhelmed with the selection this store had. I usually can only find maybe two or three flavors of Land Run in any given store, however the Spirit Shop has at least 15! That alone is proof enough that this store works hard to have anything and everything you'd need!