

St. Paul's Sunday's Best Boutique pledges to help children with cancer

By Naomi Krueger, TC Daily Planet

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Phyllis Gilliam in Sunday's Best Boutique (photo courtesy of Phyllis Gilliam)

Phyllis Gilliam's shop is filled with hats on every wall, floor to ceiling. Now the owner of [Sunday's Best Boutique](#) in Saint Paul hopes to help children with cancer and honor her mother's legacy by donating from the profit of hat sales to [Hats Off for Cancer](#) until the end of January. Gilliam is supporting Hats Off for Cancer in part because she lost her mother to Leukemia in 1987, and is herself a breast cancer survivor.

Sunday's Best Boutique, 601 University Avenue West, Saint Paul, MN • Phone: (651) 222-3337 • Tue - Thu: 10:00 am-6:00 pm; Fri: 10:00 am-8:00 pm; Sat: 10:00 am-6:00 pm

"We're known for, as you can see, all the different kinds of hats," Gilliam said. Formal wear and church wear for men and women is her specialty. Formerly known as Just Churchin' It Fashions, and before that PG Consignment and Fashions, Sunday's Best Boutique opened in the Frogtown Square Building on the corner of Dale and University Avenue in St. Paul in May 2011.

The location is significant—it was here that Gilliam's mother, Sarah Hunter, made her mark on the community. Hunter moved her family from Kansas City to St. Paul in 1975.

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"Back when we first moved here, this used to be the Belmont, and strip joints. It was like lights, camera action on this corner," Gilliam said. "The neighborhood we were in, there was a lot of prostitution, and when we moved here she saw the same thing. We had just bought a home in the neighborhood. When she seen that, she went and was picketing to get this neighborhood corner to change. And so, I think my mom paved the way, knowing that one day her daughter would be here."

Gilliam's mother and the other demonstrators helped convince the city to push out the Faust and Flick adult theaters, the Belmont strip club, and other tawdry businesses. The city purchased the properties and together with several nonprofit organizations, has been redeveloping the neighborhood.

"This neighborhood is changing," Brian Singer, director of lending and technical assistance at the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) said. "That corner used to be highly undesirable, but it is turning around rapidly."

Now, the intersection of Dale and University is home to the Rondo Library, a senior living center, and many small businesses including some mentored and financially assisted by the NDC. Gilliam took courses for emerging business owners at the NDC and applied for an NDC loan to move her business into the Frogtown Square Building.

"It's a beautiful thing to see. I just see it was credit to my mom. I didn't know the future, but ... she's looking down, and I know she's thinking, 'I made a difference,'" Gilliam said.

Gilliam plans to donate up to \$1,000 from the profits of hats sold during December 2011 and January 2012. Hats Off for Cancer, a nonprofit organization based in California, collects hats and monetary donations to give hats to children suffering from cancer.

"Children with cancer? That's a terrible thing. I have nine children. Seven grandchildren and one on the way. Just imagine, children going through cancer," said Gilliam.

Interested donors can purchase a hat from Sundays Best Boutique during January, or visit the [Hats Off for Cancer](#) website to learn about other donation options.

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