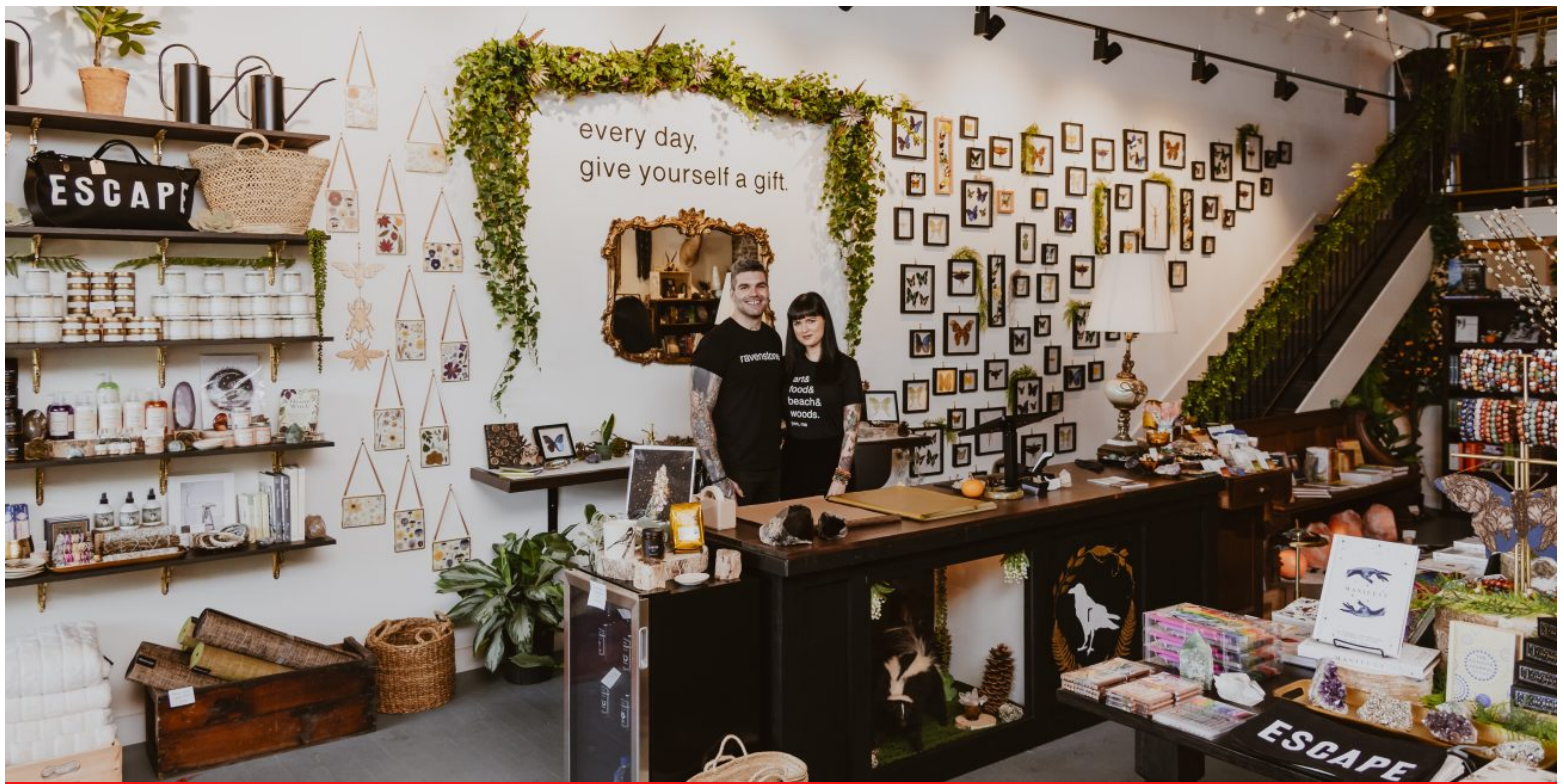


LIFESTYLE, NEWS

GENDRONS ESTABLISH RAVENSTONE, RAVE ABOUT LYNN IN THE PROCESS

SUBMITTED BY PAUL HALLORAN | September 23, 2020



Eric and Kathleen Gendron, of Lynn, have opened Ravenstone, an eclectic gift shop offering jewelry, crystals, plants, books, art and other items, on Exchange Street in Lynn. (Spenser Hasak)

For people who knew virtually nothing about Lynn five years ago, Kathleen and Eric Gendron have quickly become unabashed cheerleaders for the city.

“We are hard-core, pro-Lynners,” Kathleen said. “We still get asked why we would choose Lynn, and we are very happy to educate people on how awesome Lynn is.”

Kathleen founded Ravenstone, an eclectic gift shop offering jewelry, crystals, plants, books, art and other items, on Exchange Street Aug. 28. Eric left his job to support her vision, marking a major step in their transition from the corporate world to entrepreneurship.

“It’s been amazing,” Eric said. “A lot of people were familiar with us from the vendor markets. This is a perfect time. It’s nice coming into a place with positive energy.”

The Rhode Island natives were working in marketing and living in Boston when they became aware of a house for sale in the Highlands. They came out for an open house and put in an offer on the 135-year-old Victorian the following day. In October 2015 the Gendrons became Lynners.

“We didn’t know anything about Lynn,” said Eric, who played football at Holy Cross. “We had been to a show at the Auditorium, but that was about it. When we first moved here, we were still going into Boston at night, but we quickly realized how much Lynn has to offer. Lynn has great food, the beach, Lynn Woods and a strong arts community.”

Kathleen dipped her toe into the arts waters when Eric bought her a gift certificate to take a pottery class at the Lydia Pinkham Building.

“That was the first time I ever did anything creative,” she said. “It unlocked something.”

While she enjoyed creating ceramics, which is a somewhat lengthy process, Kathleen was looking for a more immediate outlet and started making jewelry. She parlayed that into a thriving business, selling products online, at a studio in the Pinkham building and at vendor markets.

“The jewelry seemed to strike a nerve with people,” she said. “We realized that it could be a bigger business. We are giving new life to unique vintage designs using recycled brass that we finish with precious metals to create bold, high-quality, conversation-starting jewelry.”

Eric and Kathleen weren’t necessarily looking to open a storefront, but when they became aware of the space on Exchange Street – next door to the popular One Mighty Mill bagel emporium – they came down to take a look and immediately took a fancy to it. The 2,600 square feet is more than double what they had in their space at the Pinkham. Throw in a kitchen and office and the fact that Laurence Howard had completely renovated the space for her Pick Up Modern & More store, and the Gendrons were sold.

They needed some financial assistance, however, and that is where the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) of Lynn came in, providing loan funding and general support.

“EDIC has been wonderful,” Kathleen said. “We got some genuine, honest support from people that know small business.”

EDIC/Lynn Executive Director James Cowdell said the Ravenstone – the name the Gendrons gave to their home and carried over to the business – is a positive addition to the burgeoning downtown scene.

“Eric and Kathleen have created a store with character that will undoubtedly attract visitors to the downtown,” Cowdell said. “EDIC is pleased to support their efforts and we look forward to their success.”

The Gendrons, who have two employees in addition to themselves, started renting the space on Jan. 1 and the original plan was to open in May, but like everything else, they were delayed by the pandemic. They look at that as a fortunate consequence, however.

“It gave us more time to think and set it up the way we wanted to,” Eric said. “We’re lucky our online business stayed strong.”

Now that they are open – Wednesday-Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. – and life is creeping back in the direction of normal, the store is providing an outlet for people who are eager to get back in circulation.

“Opening the doors has been a cathartic experience for us and our customers,” Eric said. “We’ve had some emotional interactions. Part of the decision to open a storefront was the ability to connect with people.”

The Gendrons are thrilled to be making their living in a community in which they feel so comfortable.

“We love Lynn and we see the potential,” Kathleen said. “We’re proud to be part of the energy. This is a positive place to connect with people. Now, we’re excited to finally be able to share our vision with others.”