

Boutique is 'all in the family'

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Custom Wear Boutique is truly
"a family affair".

With father Doug running the business with the part-time help of wife Margaret, sons Scott and Chris working the computer and twin daughters Kim and Karen helping out during busy times, they maintain a "family image".

And it's for this reason they'll turn away business they think is obscene — the Forces won't print anything on a shirt they wouldn't wear themselves.

Since taking over in June, it's been a busy time for everyone, and in particular Doug, who works 80 hours a week at the Quinte Mall location.

"If friends want to see me, I tell them to come here," he jokes.

Custom Wear Boutique offers an infinite selection of personalized fashions. Customers have photographs, artwork and other ideas transferred to a t-shirt or sweatshirt.

Particularly popular is children's artwork. Force says grandparents often come in with youngsters in tow.

And plenty of people make use of the printing for gag gifts — business logos on underwear, a man's head transposed onto an airplane. One woman even took a photograph of her fiancée's head and put it on a male stripper's body for a joke.

"There's no end of ideas people have," says Doug.

As well as transferring photographs and other pictures, lettering is available for an added cost.

And for those who don't feel they're creative, a complete line of transfers are also available, as well as wildlife sweat shirts.

"I try to emphasize one-of-a-kind here," says Doug. "You don't have to be a great artist to come up with something."

His most recent t-shirt creation came from the work he had done with the boy scouts. He had photographs of those activities transposed onto a t-shirt.

It's this kind of thing that makes the business so unique, he explains.

Although people like to see their images on bright neons, Doug suggests white for best reproduction. And because a photograph will lose some quality once it's transferred, harsh shadows don't reproduce well.

Doug, who admits to being a perfectionist, says he works hard to come up with a product a customer will like. And it's because of this hard work that he gets repeat business.

Moving to Belleville only four years ago, he is a certified managerial accountant. This is his first business venture.

But it is something he has been looking at doing for a long time.

The artistry portion of the business is well suited to the family's needs. Doug and Margaret both enjoy crafts while their oldest son Scott "is crazy about computers".

The Forces are gearing now for a busy season ahead. "We've been warned (by the former owners) it will be crazy here."