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The Chicago Market: Living and Giving Names January Retailer of the Month

The Chicago Market: Living and Giving has named Julie Windsor of Beat Street in Winnetka, IL, as its January 2010 Retailer of the Month. The ROTM program is designed to acknowledge exceptional retailers who are making a difference in the gift industry, as well as to provide inspiration to other retailers who can benefit from the winners' stories.

Julie Windsor, owner of Beat Street, has a passion for art. Though she considers herself an artist first, she got her start as a rep in the clothing industry, traveling to shows and stores all across the country. When she wasn't out on the road, she could be found hard at work in her Chicago-based showroom. In 2003, when her showroom lease ended, she opted not to renew so that she could spend more time close to home, but soon a new opportunity arose and she could not resist.

In the fall of 2003, Windsor opened Beat Street in a space of about 500 square feet, "the smallest somewhat retail space I could find," she says. It was on a side street to the Winnetka Business district that had mostly offices and no other retail stores except a plumbing showroom. Windsor called it Beat Street, shortened from "Off the Beaten Path," and filled it from floor to ceiling with a mixture of seasonal goods, retro-styled toys, candy, clothing and artistic finds. "I kept the prices as low as possible using hard keystones on everything," says Windsor. It took almost a year for people to seek out and find Beat Street, but soon enough word spread, and within two years there was need for expansion.

In May of 2006, Beat Street moved to a space twice the size of its former location, roughly 1,000 square feet, in the Hubbard Woods Shopping District on Green Bay Road in Winnetka. "By 2007, we added a back building with on-site storage, and the sales just kept going up," says Windsor. In June of 2009, Beat Street expanded yet again to an even larger space, its present-day location, at 930 Green Bay Road. "The store continues to do even better since the move, and we are still growing and getting new customers everyday," she says.

Beat Street is unique due to "our product selection, artistic displays that are hands on, staff that like matching up people with fun stuff and creative energy. It is as if the store has a pulse," Windsor states. She resides in Winnetka with her husband, Ted, and their children Julian, Adrian, Lily and their pet parrot, Kiwi.

Each month a different retailer is to be featured. To nominate someone for Retailer of the Month, e-mail Paula Guiliano at pguiliano@mmart.com. For more information on MMPI or The Chicago Market: Living and Giving, visit www.shopchicagomarket.com.