

OPpEN HOUSE

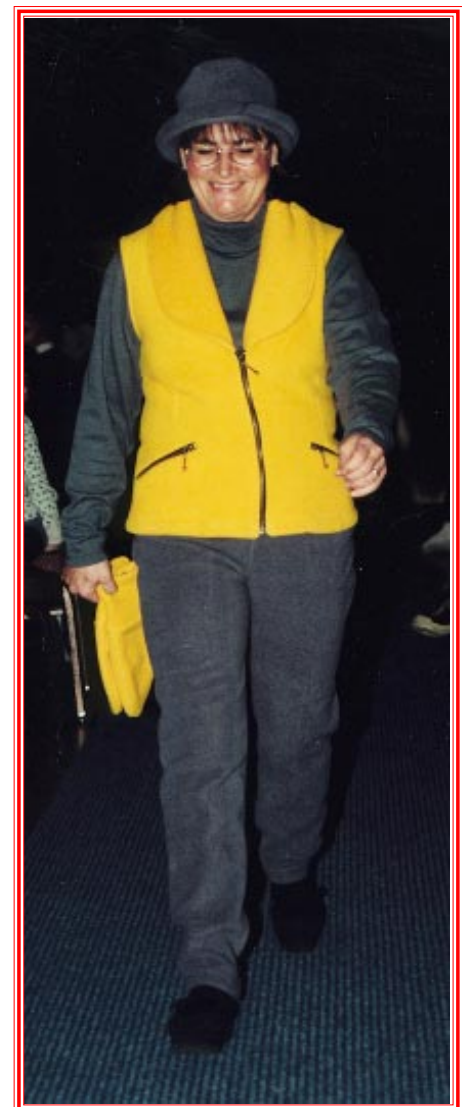
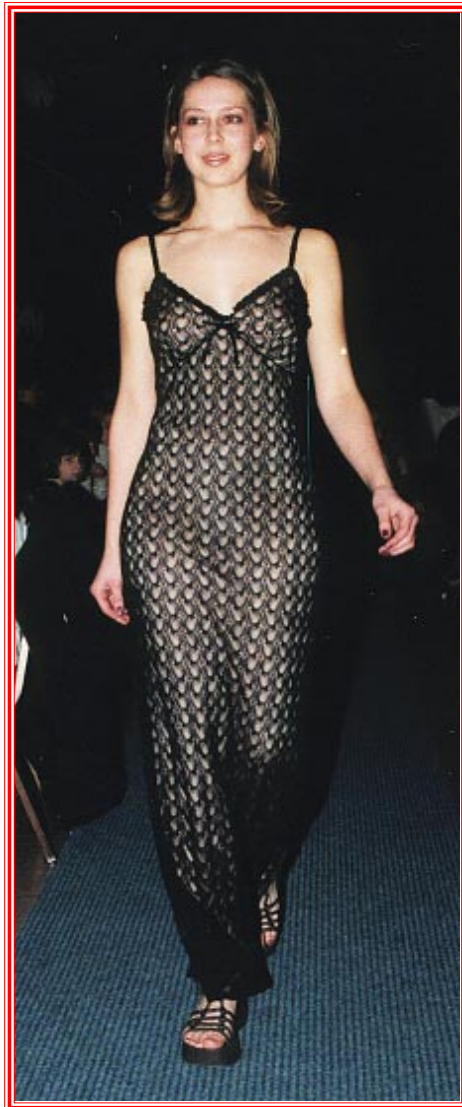
Haines Junction

Started: 1993

Contact: Diane Oppen

OPpEN HOUSE retails adult and teen clothing. Its main outlet has been the garage of Diane Oppen's home but she occasionally goes on the road to sell her clothes. Diane also sells her merchandise through the Raven Hotel shop, "Raven Memories."

Getting started: After an agent sent Diane a catalogue for reversible jackets, she talked to other people about their interest in buying clothes locally and decided to step into the clothing business. For about two years she sold the jackets at festivals and trade shows, in halls or homes in other communities, and from her home. She then began to go on buying trips and adding other types of clothing. Last summer she also sold clothes in the Raven Hotel gift shop which gave her access to the tourist market.



Key to success: Diane has kept her hours and approach very flexible. For example, local people can take clothes home to try on. Diane also provides lots of extra touches such as handmade gift certificates or free fancy gift wrapping. A lot of help and support from Diane's family has also been fundamental to the business' success. OPpEN HOUSE has gained exposure in the last four years through fashion shows put on by youth organizations.

Lessons learned: The biggest challenge Diane faces is to buy an appropriate amount of clothes for a small market. Her trips to other communities have helped her expand her clientele base and, therefore, buy more of one product type.

Future of business: Diane will sell clothes at "Raven Memories" again next summer but has no plans for additional expansion of the business. Her main goal is to keep the business fun and manageable in size.