

Neighborhood **FOCUS**

Best-Made Shoes celebrates forty years of footwear in Bloomfield

By Andrew McKeon the Bulletin

Bloomfield - Upon walking into Best-Made Shoes (5143 Liberty Ave.), most customers quickly realize it is more than just a shoe store. For certified pedorthist Marc Rosen, footwear has been the family business for decades.

His father, the son of a shoemaker himself, moved from Florida to Pittsburgh forty years ago to open Best-Made Shoes at its original Liberty Ave. location, just a few blocks down the street. "Back then, shoes were made to last," Rosen said. "These days, most shoes are built like junk."

He sees the results every day, as new customers ask if he can help them figure out just why they are experiencing so much foot, leg, and back pain. The store's customers come from all walks of life - from elderly people with arthritis to young athletes searching for the right arch supports.

When shopping for shoes, one of the most common mistakes people make, Rosen explained, is to believe that they know their own shoe size, which is usually different than the size their feet actually need. Modern day shoe outlets rarely help shoppers accurately address their footwear needs. Most of these stores are oriented around self-serve shopping; the lengths of their customer service only extend to, as the pedorthist said, "a teen handing you a shoe off the rack." Rosen's father, Gene, customizes prescription footwear to meet the clinical needs of many Best-Made customers. Because it keeps attracting "destination commerce," Rosen

said his family's shop has not been greatly affected by the changing demographics in Bloomfield. People come from all over the city, and even other states, to buy our shoes," he told the Bulletin. "We've even got one guy who regularly drives in from Detroit to shop here."



ABOVE: At Best-Made Shoes (5143 Liberty Ave.) in Bloomfield, Marc Rosen (right) helps Tara Sherry-Torres find the right fit for a new pair of Birkenstocks. Rosen and his father, Gene, are celebrating the store's forty years in the footwear business. Photo by Andrew McKeon.

We're kind of teaching people about their feet." Marc Rosen, Best-Made Shoes

Now that more young people all over the city are eschewing car travel to instead commute by foot, Rosen's selection of Birkenstocks and New Balance footwear is in high demand. And, for as much as websites like Amazon and Zappos have cut into the brick-and-mortar shoe business, the internet has simultaneously helped potential customers connect with Best-Made.

From the back room, where Rosen fields phone calls to schedule customer drop-off/pick-up and help people understand the nuts and bolts of their prescriptive footwear, the shoe store almost feels like a doctor's office. Running a nationally accredited facility that accepts insurance plans and HMOs, Rosen knows the individual needs of his customers the way a specialist knows the specific needs of his patients.

"We're kind of teaching them about their feet," he said. "And it's not always just the feet, because shoes affect many other parts of the body. That's why you need to make sure your shoes have the right fit."

Just like a doctor's office, Best-Made also displays a humorous, quasi-motivational motto on a few vanity pillows dotted around the store. It is a mantra, Rosen said, for everyone to heed when they go shoe-shopping: "If the shoe fits, buy it in every color."

To learn more about the local store and its services, call 412-621-9363 or visit www.bestmadeshoes.com.