



A Sensible Woman

By: Kim Gibson
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Ann Hodges is “almost” a Charlotte native. After 48 years in the Queen City she certainly feels at home here—and it was here that she made a wonderful home for her two sons. “I am personally most proud of the wonderful men that my two sons have become,” she says earnestly.

While the boys have grown up and moved away from the area, family is still important to Ann. Her oldest son, Buck, and his wife, Mallory, live near Raleigh. They have two children, who provide Ann with much joy. Her younger son, Jason, is single and lives in Washington, DC. Ann loves being with her family and says, “My perfect day is any time all my family is together. Having everyone home and at the dinner table for great conversation is a rare and beautiful time.”

And just as Ann relied on her natural ability to remain reasonable and level-headed as the single parent of two boys, she called on those personality traits when deciding what to name her home decor and accessories retail business, Sensible Space.

While she was part owner of a family business, Hobart Smith Homes for 16 years, Ann developed a keen sense of design. One of her jobs back then was working with home buyers to select the finishes for their new homes and making the selections for the spec houses. Ann left the business, which two of her brothers still operate, and took a design course in Florida. She decided to branch out on her own and started Sensible Space in 2003, but still finds time to do all the finish selections for her family’s new home construction business.

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When she first opened Sensible Space, Ann says she concentrated her efforts on helping clients find the right items and accessories for their surroundings. “The primary client for my services was the homeowner who needed room rearrangement,” she explained. “Proper room arrangement is based on the focal point and architecture of the room. We were so successful that our clients wanted more—they wanted us to add new furniture, artwork, accessories and rugs....The business has grown to include not only rearrangement, but creating beautiful rooms from empty spaces and staging for real estate agents.”

Ann’s newest location is a large retail space in the new BLACKLION in Huntersville, which opened last August. Ann describes it as a “new prototype store for the corporation” that is well lit and has spacious aisles. She also has two large retail spaces in the BLACKLION in Pineville. Ann was excited about being active in the Lake Norman area again. Though based in Charlotte, Hobart Smith Homes built several neighborhoods in the area: Breckinridge, Stratford Forest, Wellsley Village and a portion of Birkdale. “When the new BLACKLION opened in Huntersville, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to be a merchant in the new store and get back into the lake area where I will always have a

special place in my heart for the residents,” she says. Sensible Space specializes in transitional furniture, lamps, accessories and artwork. To keep up with the latest trends, Ann travels to New York for the International Gift Show two times a year to purchase products for her retail locations.

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For a woman starting in business, Ann recommends a good business plan including financial requirements for starting the business as well as the finances needed to support oneself while building one’s business. A word of caution, though; “Just because you start a business, it does not mean that you will immediately start to earn an income,” she says. Ann also brings a strong work ethic to her job. “Every client gets 110 percent of my effort,” she promises.

Ann loves reading thrillers and mysteries in her spare time. Two of her favorite authors are David Baldacci and James Patterson. She also belongs to a neighborhood Mah Jong group that meets every week for a game day.

Ann’s creativity is encouraged by the people she has encountered throughout her life. “Inspiration comes from so many sources,” she says, “such as a client who takes the time to write a note after we finish her job saying that she cannot believe she is in the same house; a co-worker who, at the end of a long, hard day is still smiling and is proud of the finished product; and my late Dad who taught me by his example how to work hard for what you want to achieve in life.”

But in the end, it’s Ann’s own belief in herself that has brought her this far. As she puts it, “I am motivated by the sheer will to succeed.” What a sensible woman! 🌸



2009 Trends In Decorating & Design

Ann tells *Lake Norman Woman* that the biggest trend for 2009 will be the continued awareness of green and sustainable products for the home:

“In 2009, consumer interest will continue to grow as new green products are introduced and prices for green products begin to become more realistic for the average consumer.” Trends include:

Green flooring products

Green counter tops

Re-purposing furniture

According to Ann, “Mixing the old with the new creates a peaceful and tranquil room and helps to save the environment.”