

# AT HOME IN THE



Walk down Main Street in Westhampton Beach, NY and you're likely to run into locals who know Elyse Richman.

Elyse owns and operates not just one, but three shops there – Shock, a women's clothing store, Baby Shock / Shock Kids and Shock Ice Cream. Her very loyal customer base – mothers and grandmothers who know her women's store – shop Baby Shock / Shock Kids for their children's needs or baby gifts, naturally. Elyse says, "When he was a baby, I used to keep my son Maxwell in a crib at my store window. Everyone on Main Street has watched him grow up." Now that Maxwell is 11 years old, he's outgrown the store. In the years to come, Elyse hopes to secure approval for a complete renovation and expansion of Baby Shock / Shock Kids and double its size.

"I am very lucky to live and work and 'shop at Shock' in Westhampton Beach. My commute is less than three minutes. The people in the Hamptons are out here to get away from their worries and harried lives. The style of Baby Shock / Shock Kids reflects the casual, beachy lifestyle here. We really don't carry any serious clothing."

Baby Shock / Shock Kids is a 1,000-square-foot space. Attached to it is Shock Ice Cream. "We have the best ice cream store a kid of any age could imagine; it has over 60 flavors of ice cream, Italian ice and gelato along with Dippin' Dots and soft serve. We do birthday parties there," Elyse says. Baby Shock / Shock Kids is packed full of merchandise: layette to size 7 for boys and layette to size 14 for girls – collections from Baby Steps; ArtWalk Baby sweaters and blankets; Mish Mish, Lemon t-shirts, Signorelli, Charlie Rocket, Tickle Toes, Trumpette, Twigs and Twirls, Lily Pulitzer, Twirley

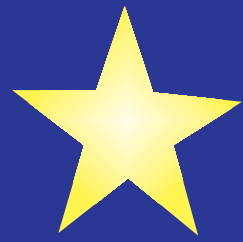
Girl, Flowers By Zoe, So Nikki, E Land, Kids Republic, Angel Dear, Skivvy Doodles, Books to Bed and more. Zutano is a staple; the line is the first Elyse buys for the store back in March 2000, at her first ENK Children's Club trade show in New York. "Most people visiting my store come in just to take a look around. I believe in offering my customers a variety to choose from," she says.

Through the years, all three businesses have been voted to the "best" lists of Dan's Papers – a cherished magazine covering life in the Hamptons since 1960 – and Hamptons Magazine, a glossy go-to-30+-year publication. The Shock brand adds to the friendly personality of Westhampton Beach by supporting local charities and community events like the local soup kitchen fundraiser and Shock's own annual coats drive, collecting hundreds of coats that are donated to the needy.

"Business in the Hamptons can be a bit challenging," she adds. "We are a year-round business in a resort community. Traffic slows down in the off season, but Baby Shock / Shock Kids stays open every day, all year."

Over the years, Elyse's shops have become such an integral part of the Westhampton Beach community that customers have become friends. And with the opening of her children's store, that relationship became even more special. "Customers visit your store at the happiest moment of their lives – the birth of their own child or a relative's," says Elyse. "You are starting a new relationship with them, and their shopping experience at your store is one that memories are made of."

# HAMPTONS



Elyse began in the garment business with a love for fashion as a student at Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, starting her own business designing t- and sweatshirts under the name Rags to Richmans. "My first order was with Henri Bendel on 57th Street. That was my motivation to go door to door to boutiques that I knew." She opened a wholesale business after that, on 37th Street.

During a trip to the Hamptons in 1986, Elyse negotiated for the space that becomes Shock, which she and a partner run along with her wholesale business in the city. "We traveled to Europe, bringing back clothing from Paris and Italy," she says. "I loved what I was doing." In the 90's, her wholesale business dwindles and she decides to live full time in Westhampton Beach. Just when she gets pregnant, a favorite retail space becomes available. "I always liked the location for a store," she says, "and in retail, we're always saying, 'Location, location, location.'" She rents the space, not knowing then it is to become Baby Shock / Shock Kids. "My inspiration was my own pregnancy. I knew absolutely nothing about baby clothes, baby manufacturers or this part of the industry, but I was having a baby, so I might as well learn about baby clothes."

Now, Elyse's son Maxwell is teaching her a thing or two about children's fashion. Over the years, he attends many a trade show with her, developing a keen eye for new trends in what boys like. "Maxwell has street sense; growing up in retail gives you that," Elyse says. "He actually spotted a new resource for us; the t-shirt line Kids Republic has done well in our store and we have continued to buy it."

Maxwell's style is casual, rarely wearing structured clothing. He likes to run around town in sneakers, t-shirts and sweats, wearing his baseball cap. "It's fun to look at fashion with my Mom," Maxwell says. "I'm interested in what she's doing, how she works, what she likes."

After buying Maxwell his first surfboard, Elyse teaches him that giving back is an important part of being in business by founding Eye Surf for Peace (EyeSurfForPeace.com), a t-shirt company. A portion of sales is donated to KidsForKids.org.uk, an organization dedicated to raising awareness of the hardships children face in the remote villages in Darfur, Sudan. "Kids can change the world," Maxwell says on his website. This kid sure changes Elyse's world, in so many ways.

"I have a customer who bought her daughter her first birthday dress at Baby Shock / Shock Kids. She's made it a tradition to come back year after year to buy her daughter a dress for her birthday. Her daughter is turning 11 years old this summer -the same age as my son. I joke and tell her we will do her wedding dress one day."

Make sure to stop in to Shock and Baby Shock / Shock Kids and Shock Ice Cream and savor the local Westhampton Beach experience. You just might meet the proprietor there ... Elyse Richman. A girl with roots in the garment district, who makes a difference in the retail business, her customers and her community -every day.

-Janet Muniz 