

Knots and Weaves finds new home

MALVERN — Oriental carpet gallery Knots & Weaves has a new home in the Old Malvern Firehouse.

By **GRETCHEN METZ - Staff Writer**

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The irony of the new location has not escaped owners Kerry and Jim Greim who found themselves scouting out retail real estate after a fire in early December ruined their inventory to the tune of \$2 million.

“Isn’t that crazy,” said Kerry Greim, about Knots & Weaves new home in the firehouse as it opened last week.

For the Greims, the saga started with a phone call at 1:30 on the morning of Dec. 9.

It was the security company that monitored Knots & Weaves’ showroom, located in the 300 block of East King Street in the borough at that time.

A fire alarm had been triggered.

“(The phone) went off 8 inches from my head,” said Kerry Greim. “I didn’t think much of it. I had been asleep, the word ‘fire’ went right beyond me.”

About two minutes later, the phone rang again.

This time the security company said there was a burglar alarm going off and someone with a key was needed at the store.

Jim Greim drove from the couple’s home in nearby East Goshen.

“It was weird, it was very quiet. There were no sirens,” Jim Greim said, recalling arriving at the blaze that lit up Malvern’s sky in the wee hours that morning.

The firefighters were already there.

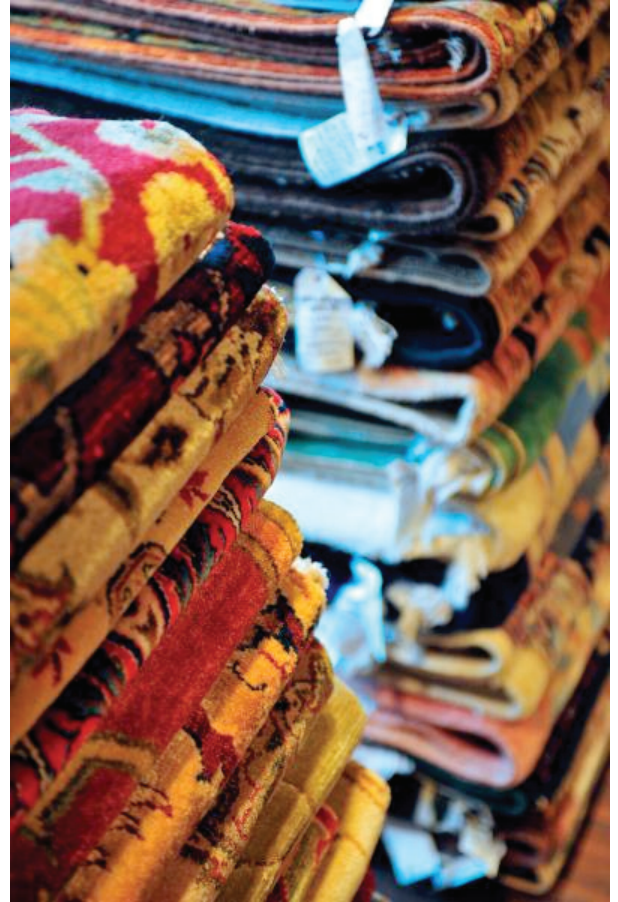
“I saw the building was engulfed,” Greim said. His feelings at the time: “disbelief.”

Greim borrowed a cell phone from a firefighter and called his wife. She dropped off their children at her parents’ home and went to be with her husband.

The Greims said they were told the fire started upstairs in one of the building’s apartments. No cause has been determined to date, a firefighter from Malvern said.

The fire injured two residents along with one Paoli firefighter, Jay Wustner, who fractured both feet and ankles in a 20-foot fall during the fire.

About 75 firefighters battled the blaze for more than two hours in the freezing cold.



To thank the firefighters involved, Knots & Weaves is donating a portion of proceeds from rug sales for one month to the Malvern and Paoli Fire Companies. The fundraising ends May 14.

Kerry Greim said though the gallery's inventory was not burned in the fire, it sustained substantial smoke and water damage.

The building, however, was rendered uninhabitable.

Jim Greim said he knew Knots & Weaves would be out of business for a long time if he waited for the property to be restored and usable again.

That's when the Greims started looking for a new location, all the while hoping to stay close to their old spot.

"If we moved out of the borough, we'd lose customers," Kerry Greim said.

As luck would have it, the Old Malvern Firehouse at 101 Church Street, and just across the parking lot from the gutted gallery, was just wrapping up renovations.

Outside there was a sign advertising space available.

"We took it literally as 'a sign,'" Jim Greim, 42, said.

About the same time, the rental agent for the firehouse property put a business card in the Knots & Weaves mailbox with the message, "call me if you need space," Kerry Greim, 44, said.

That's when it all came together.

Knots & Weaves is now situated in the front two rooms of the old firehouse, a place where fire engines were once parked.

The historic building dates back to 1899, built by the Malvern Free Will Fire company that was founded 11 years earlier.

The fire company was established by residents of the Village of Malvern who had become concerned with the fires triggered by sparks from the smokestacks on trains that traveled along the Pennsylvanian Railroad tracks. Back in those days fires either were put out by bucket brigades or left to burn out.

Knots & Weaves held a grand opening Thursday.

The gallery sells middle to high-end carpets made in Asia and the Middle East.

"If you are looking for \$200 to \$300 rugs you won't find it here, no Loew's or Home Depot blowout," Jim Greim said. "But if you're looking for \$800 rugs, definitely; \$600 rugs, definitely; rugs under \$1,000, definitely."

On the higher end, price tags can range into the \$10,000-and-up category.

Some people spend money on shoes or cars, others invest in carpets, Jim Greim pointed out.

As the couple looks back on four months of reordering inventory, updating customers and setting up shop in a new location, they have some advice for other small business owners.

Kerry Greim: back up computer records off site.

Jim Greim: have faith. When one door closes, another opens.