

On the Move

Marketing to Mommy-to-be

By **Elizabeth C. Martinez**
Managing Editor

Moms-to-be can proudly show off their bump and still look stylish and ready to take charge in the boardroom—thanks to hip boutiques like Pickles & Ice Cream Maternity Apparel. Long gone are the days of muumuus and unflattering maternity clothes. With chic maternity lines sold at Pickles & Ice Cream, such as Citizens of Humanity, Earl Jean, and Japanese Weekend—expecting fashionistas no longer have to give up their sense of style.

Michele Sparks, owner of Pickles & Ice Cream Maternity Apparel in McAllen, says she is excited to introduce the store to the Rio Grande Valley market. The 1,950-square-foot store is located at 7017 N. 10th St, Ste. O-2. It is the company's tenth location, with other stores in Houston, Dallas, Nashville, Tenn., and Birmingham, Ala.

Sparks, who was born in West Texas, calls herself a “military brat,” having lived in Hawaii and Germany. When she moved to South Texas in 1997, after her husband accepted a position in marketing, she immediately felt comfortable immersed in the culturally diverse area.

Sparks comes with a strong background in marketing. She earned her bachelor's degree in marketing from Angelo State University in San Angelo and has for the past 13 years been involved in advertising, business development, and public relations.

It was about two years ago that she decided to get serious about opening her own business, so she started looking for opportunities.

“I've always wanted to own my own business,” Sparks said. “The real decision I had to make was what type of business. Also, another important decision was do I want to go into a franchise or a start-up.”

“When I came across Pickles & Ice Cream, I knew that it would be a perfect fit for McAllen and the Valley as a whole. It was something that we didn't have and I knew that it would be something that I would enjoy being part of,” Sparks

explained. Sparks, a mother herself, recalls the frustrating mornings she spent trying to find suitable work attire to accentuate her growing belly.

“I'm a girly girl and I love fashion,” Sparks said. “When I was pregnant it was hard for me to find stylish and well-made suits for work. Pickles & Ice Cream not only offers quality clothing, but a high level of customer service.”

The McAllen store will feature a mommy and kid-friendly atmosphere. A kid's area will have a stash of toys and a TV playing children's movies.

“We want to make the shopping experience relaxing and enjoyable. We want to help women find clothes that will enable them to carry their sense of style, while they carry their babies,” she said.

For more information, call (956) 373-9516 or visit www.picklesandicecream.com



Michele Sparks, owner of Pickles & Ice Cream, is focused on providing a high level of customer service at her new maternity apparel boutique.

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