

*food fashion*

*passion for jewelry*  
 is her greatest pleasure

**Renee Wilson Connolly '69** sparkles. She also jingles and sometimes when she gestures, she jangles. The delicate tones come from her charm bracelet and bangles; and the sparkle comes not only from the diamonds she wears, but also from her smile.

As the owner of Bijoux, a jewelry store in the Gatehouse at Greenspring Station (just down the road from Maryvale) that specializes in antique, estate, contemporary and custom jewelry, Renee loves jewelry and says she "loves to pile it on."

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Although she's always been passionate about jewelry, a trait she inherited from her Russian grandmother, it wasn't until she was in her late 30s that she fell into the business. After 13 years of feeling like "a square peg in a round hole" at Maryvale, Renee went to art school. She earned a BFA at Maryland Institute College of Art in clay and sculpture and an MFA from University of Kentucky. For years she worked as a studio artist and at age 37 took a steady job at Heirloom Jewels in Baltimore's Cross Keys. "I loved it. The job fit like a glove," says Renee. But after 15 years, it was time to move on. That's when she opened Bijoux (October 2005.)

The atmosphere at Bijoux is like a cocktail party, say her associates. People come in and chat while they look at the inventory. "I worry about making a customer, not a sale," says Renee. As visitors comment on the eclectic collection on display in the small shop, Renee casually gives some background on the pieces and the period. "My first love is antique and estate jewelry. The Victorian pieces are so elaborate and have so much symbolism," she explains.

Although jewelry isn't seasonal like clothing, owning a business takes a lot of work. "In this economy you really need to be creative and disciplined," says Renee.

Creative and disciplined are not traits often found together in one person, so how does Renee pull it off? "It wasn't easy being a creative kid in Catholic school in the 60s," she says. But, as the nuns taught order and regimen, art teacher Stella Hazard cultivated Renee's creative side. Today, Renee keeps a journal with facts and figures about the business (as well as drawings.)

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