



THE LAKE FOREST SHOP
CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF STYLE

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**ICONIC RETAILER, THE LAKE FOREST SHOP MARKS 100TH ANNIVERSARY IN
BUSINESS SEPTEMBER, 2022**

***Family-owned Fashion Institution Celebrates a Century of Historic Style Leading up to
September 15th Anniversary Event***

LAKE FOREST, IL (February 14, 2022) — As style icon Coco Chanel famously said, “Fashion changes, but style endures.” This mantra serves as a calling card for The Lake Forest Shop, a fashion institution that was inspired by Coco Chanel herself, pushing Chanel friend and founder Margaret Baxter Foster to open The Lake Forest Sports Shop 100 years ago. And, during the past century The Shop has been in business, discriminating women have relied on the fashion institution to keep them dressed to the nines.

Located in Lake Forest, IL, a one-hour drive from downtown Chicago, The Shop is family-owned and operated by third generation socialite Ellen Stirling, a style icon in her own right. When you step into The Shop, it is unlike any retail experience you have encountered. From the hand-selected collections to the friendly and knowledgeable stylists and seamstresses, The Shop is *THE* place for Special Occasions, Debutante Balls, Weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, as well as everyday wear including outerwear, knits, and accessories. The carefully curated retail shop features a unique mix of designers hand-picked from across the globe by Ellen and boasts a history as rich as the fabrics they carry. Clients range from Chicago fashion leaders to Lady Elizabeth Longman, the Marchioness of Salisbury and British Royalty.

Founded in 1922 as the Lake Forest Sports Shop by Stirling’s grandmother, socialite Margaret Baxter Foster in famed Market Square, it quickly became North Shore’s leading women’s specialty store. At the time, Market Square was built as the nation’s first artfully designed shopping center, and completely transformed Lake Forest’s business district to a focal point of the community. Like many women of the time, Margaret enjoyed shopping for clothes, and did so extensively, particularly on family trips abroad. Whenever Margaret Baxter Foster went to Paris she would see her great friend, Coco Chanel and would buy closets full of clothes. Eventually the closets were overstuffed and Margaret’s husband urged her to do something about it.

“My grandmother thought, if Coco can do it, so can I,” added Ellen. “In 1922, with the tags still in French Francs she opened a shop on Market Square, still in the same location today. This was the foundation of the Sports Shop and it evolved from there.”

Margaret went on many domestic and international buying trips. Her shop and its approach proved to be a success, catering to the right population at a time of rapid change in the world of fashion. Soon satellite locations of the Sports Shop were opened in Hubbard Woods and on Michigan Avenue in Downtown Chicago.

Margaret was spurred on in this success by both her fashion acumen and her connections. In 1928, her husband’s daughter Leslie Foster married the world-renowned publisher, Condé Nast, whose portfolio of publications included *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*. At the time, Condé was a media darling in the publishing world, making *Vogue* a household name and getting it into the homes of every fashionable woman in the country. His influence extended to The Shop where he introduced Margaret to the world’s top designers.

Local power couple Volney and Adair Foster took over the Lake Forest Sports Shop from Volney’s mother Margaret in 1949. Volney was chairman, while also working as a partner at William Blair and Co.; Adair concerned herself more with the fashion collections and day-to-day operations. Their children were just the right age in the 1950s when they remodeled and expanded the store and opened the Children’s Shop, adding clothing for young people to the merchandise mix.

In the 1980s, the Lake Forest Sports Shop’s brand began to struggle, and after the stores had amassed half a million dollars in debt, the Fosters considered closing it. However, their daughter Ellen, having recently returned from working in fashion in England, recognized the uniqueness of the concept and thought it still had plenty of promise. In 1986 she told her parents she would be interested in taking over the store. By the 1980s, the connotation of a “sports shop” had transitioned from clothing separates to tennis rackets and baseball bats. A name change was in order, and the store became The Lake Forest Shop.

Ellen made a number of other strategic decisions designed to restore the shop’s success. She closed satellite locations, revamped the selection and remodeled The Shop’s interior in 1987. Then she started hosting trunk shows, which was unheard of at the time. By her parents’ 50th wedding anniversary in 1992, she was able to pay off the store’s debt and forge a promising roadmap for its future.

“I quickly learned that you have to evolve with the times and know your customer,” says Ellen. “From the minute you walk through the door, it’s our mission to make you feel welcome, get to know you, and to give you exceptional service that is often lost in today’s large retail stores. We believe shopping for clothing is a very personal experience and as we get to know you and your preferences, we can help you find the clothing, accessories and gifts that fit your lifestyle. Our process will never go out of style.”

Now, as The Lake Forest Shop turns 100 in September, they are making extraordinary plans to celebrate the milestone with special events, trunk shows, and promotions leading up to a historic September 15th bash.

“For 100 years, our customers, fashion partners and employees have been the key to our success,” Stirling added. “It’s the heart and soul of our business, and as a third-generation family-owned business, we are committed to maintaining the original principle that made us the most trusted fashion destination in Chicago. Our customers span multiple

generations...grandmothers, mothers and daughters come from all over the country and Europe as we customize all dresses from the fabric to color and from ball gown to cocktail.”

Personalized service and high-quality products have been the traditional calling cards of The Shop, which today includes dedicated employees who average more than 20 years at The Shop. Countless fashion partners are both renowned and emerging, from Bill Blass to ALGO of Switzerland, designer to British Royalty and Lourdes Chavez, designer to America’s foremost women.

The Lake Forest Shop is located at 265 Market Square, Lake Forest, IL 60045. For more information about The Shop and a full event schedule, visit, www.thelakeforestshop.com.

About The Lake Forest Shop

For 100 years, women have relied on The Lake Forest Shop to keep them styled to the nines. When you step into The Shop, it is unlike any retail experience you have encountered before. From the hand-selected collections, to the friendly and knowledgeable stylists, The Shop is THE place to find those special pieces that will make you stand a bit taller and carry yourself with confidence.

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