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TIVOL'S SHINING LEGACY

A CONVERSATION WITH CHAIRMAN
HAROLD TIVOL AND THIRD-GENERATION CEO
CATHY TIVOL ABOUT THE FINE ART OF GIVING

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NIGHT LIGHTS:
FASHION GOES
OUT ON THE
TOWN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY,
OVERLAND PARK!

A DAY IN THE
LIFE OF DENNY
MATTHEWS

Style Guru

words KIMBERLY WINTER STERN
photo PAUL VERSLUIS

To understand how Geri Higgins views design, you need to start with her computer.

A long-time Apple disciple, Higgins—owner of Portfolio Kitchen and Home, Kansas City's über-hip, trendsetting design boutique—sees the sleek computer as a liberating tool, along with her iPhone and iPad, of course.

"I've never been a slave to technology," explains Higgins. "My chosen technology elevates function in my life in a simple and direct way—and does it stylishly."

That's the essence of Higgins' tastemaker sensibility; her design-based business boasts a cosmopolitan showroom and a New York-style space where Team Portfolio collaborates on each client project. The team's focus? Optimizing design solutions with aesthetics that answer a family's or individual's lifestyle or a commercial client's requirements for great, functional design.

Higgins contends that concept fuels the magic Portfolio offers to clients.

"Our client-driven process centers on totally understanding a client's lifestyle and celebrates it through design that works now and well into the future," stresses Higgins. "Whether it's a couple, a nuclear family, a single person or young professionals, bungalows, suburban houses or urban penthouses and lofts, or a commercial client, we figure out design that's based on their space, their needs."

Translation? Higgins' design philosophy, team approach and array of unique products are anything but cookie-cutter in execution.

When Higgins opened Portfolio in 2004, the experienced businesswoman with a penchant for details, an eye for design and a mission for beyond-expectations client service, wanted to present Kansas City a totally unique experience for outfitting living and office spaces. Growing up in Connecticut, Higgins—known for her creative and proactive methods—was exposed to classic architecture and a way of life that simultaneously embraced beauty and functionality.

Higgins, whose successful Portfolio concept is poised for a significant marketplace expansion, says annual treks to vibrant design centers such as Milan and NYC help her identify trends that eventually find their way into Johnson County and Kansas City homes.

"I intend to keep doing my homework," laughs the design maven.

HOW WE INTERACT WITH CLIENTS: "They choose us as much as we choose them; there's a natural attraction to our client base. People desire great design, product and service."

FINDING THE RIGHT STUFF: "People and their products are very important

to us at Portfolio. We develop very personal relationships with our vendors, such as Pedini, with whom we are direct importers of their stylish Italian cabinetry."

THE TRENDS HAVE IT: "Color trends manifest themselves in fashion, jewelry, furniture, wall colors and cabinetry. Last season purples were the rage. Also, home spaces are becoming more efficient, more multi-purpose. Laundry rooms are now live environments, accommodating potting and wrapping activities; walk-in pantries often have desks and a laptop."

DEMAND AND SUPPLY: "Our Studio PKH Collection allows our ultra high-quality design work and special product collections to be accessible to price-sensitive clients. This, in part, defines our success—being able to offer our elevated Portfolio brand, regardless of budget."

GREEN MATTERS: "We are always looking to deliver products and services that promote an overall better living experience. Our green-friendly products allow us to do this in an environmentally-conscious way." ❖

For more information on Portfolio Kitchen & Home, visit www.portfolio-home.com.