

**STRETCH SPIKES IT!**  
LOCAL ART MAYERLANDS TV DEMO

**NATIONAL BEST DESTINATION**  
**KC BIZ OWNER NO. 1**

**KC'S OWN DESIGN DIVA**  
PORTFOLIO'S HIGGINS TAKES A MOVE

# KC BUSINESS

BUSINESS INSIGHT, INNOVATION & INSPIRATION

## WyCo Rules

OUR AREA'S FORMER STEPCHILD STEPS  
UP WITH GIANT PROJECTS AND PLANS

## Buy the Farm?

MORE KC BUSINESSES ARE BUYING  
THEIR CUBES. SHOULD YOU?

# Downturn? Forget it!

PARKVILLE'S TIM RICE AND OTHER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GURUS  
ARE BUCKING THE ODDS AND TAKING NO PRISONERS

# A Woman on a Mission

Portfolio Kitchen & Home's Geri Higgins is moving onward and upward

STORY BY SUSAN FOTOVICH MCCABE | PHOTO BY GARY ROHMAN



This summer, Geri Higgins will turn the page on a new chapter of her entrepreneurial journey. The founder of Kansas City's Portfolio Kitchen & Home will open the company's new, 7,000-square-foot Portfolio Flagship Store in downtown's historic Pershing Building in July.

The store will showcase Portfolio's entire collection of high-end, custom cabinetry and value-conscious Studio PKH brands, and will serve as headquarters for services like space planning, design/lifestyle consultation, product specification and design trend analysis.

While commercial and residential clients throughout the Midwest and beyond know Portfolio Kitchen & Home as a premium kitchen, bath and home design studio, the business community knows Higgins as the strategic force behind the company's growth locally, nationally and internationally. Still, Higgins credits a team approach with furthering her entrepreneurial vision.

"It's a team effort. The Portfolio culture is very unique. [It] celebrates each team member's personality, talents and expertise," Higgins says. "We all share the same core passions. This gives Portfolio a very powerful synergy, one that translates into how we impact each other, our community and our clients, and [it] translates [into] our brand."

Higgins gives equal credit to her company's clients. Portfolio's mission always has been to empower a client's signature style and lifestyle expression, she says.

In fact, serving clients by building key alliances is the driving force behind one of the core elements in Higgins' business development plan. Partnerships with much larger, more established businesses—like the deal Higgins inked with Nebraska Furniture Mart (NFM) that led to her designing and opening the Kitchen Design Studio by Portfolio at NFM—has helped position Portfolio's brand in the marketplace through enhanced terms, increased brand awareness and purchasing power.

The NFM paired Portfolio's reputation and expertise in the luxury market with NFM's luxury appliance division, bringing a high-quality yet value-driven product to the average consumer.

"This is an alliance that just made sense when the goal was to translate quality and value at the same time," Higgins says.

A focus on careful, steady growth—even during a recession that has forced competitors to downsize or close altogether—is also an important part of Higgins' approach. Yet even with a solid plan in place, Higgins admits it's important for Portfolio to remain fluid. She

## FAST FACTS ▶

- ▶ Geri Higgins
- ▶ President and owner, Portfolio Kitchen & Home
- ▶ Company Profile: A design studio specializing in luxury and international custom cabinetry, Portfolio also serves a more value-conscious consumer with its Studio PKH line. The company will open a new flagship store downtown later this summer.

says her company reinvents itself every three months, "stay[ing] open to change to ensure we're not stuck in a model that doesn't work."

Of course, like any entrepreneurial journey, Higgins' has not been without obstacles. One of the biggest has been educating consumers about the difference between lower-end, big box stores and her design studio concept. She believes big box stores attempt to fit their products into homes instead of looking at what is "aesthetically correct."

Another obstacle, she says, is doing business internationally. Higgins has developed key vendor relationships in Italy and Spain, but must overcome time, language and cultural differences, as well as the nuances of international shipping.

Higgins knows that maintaining Portfolio's place as an industry leader and innovator will forever be a challenge. But it's a challenge she's ready to face.

"The Flagship Store represents the next phase in our long-term strategy for growth," she says, "not only in Kansas City but throughout the Midwest and beyond." KCB

## RECIPE FOR A STRONG CONSUMER BASE ▶

Start with fabulous, award-winning design. Mix in a client-driven design experience for your target audience. Add an array of price points anchored by a large collection of premium products. Don't forget customer service! Finally, serve customers a confluence of sophisticated design; unique, high-quality products; and the utmost attention to detail, all customized to their look, lifestyle and budget.

