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They're got you covered from head to toe!

Two for the price of one is always a good deal; and that's what I found when I stopped in to Colonial Shoe Repair and Hair Plus on Main Street. Steve Villari takes care of the town's shoe repair needs, while his wife Diana takes care of the community's hair. It's a nice set up. Steve and Diana live upstairs, so as Steve told me, "the commute is pretty easy".

Steve has been in business 32 years, the last 22 in his present location. He started out in business in what was until recently, the Alex and Ani location on Main Street, and then moved down the street to his present Main Street site in 1985.

The first thing you'll notice when you step into Colonial Shoe Repair is the wonderful smell of leather and polish and the second thing is the number of shoes and boots on hand. With the declining number of professional shoe repairers (there are only 13 left in the state), it's no wonder. If it's made of leather, Steve can probably mend it, including shoes, boots, belts, handbags, chaps, vests, etc. About 65% of his customers are women. If an item has a zipper, there's a good chance he can fix that too. In fact, Steve told me he once repaired a body bag for a local funeral home, as well as a pair of clown shoes for a Shriner.

As you may imagine, the machines used for shoe repair are old, but Steve's a master at keeping them humming (although he did confide to me that one of his stitching machines is pretty temperamental). Most of his raw materials come from the Hanover Leather Company, but they obtain them from bigger suppliers. The best leather comes from Italy, while that sourced from Venezuela and Brazil is good quality too. He's found that leather from Mexico is often poor quality.

Steve told me that dogs are his best referral partners. Not a week goes by that someone doesn't bring in a pair of shoes that their dog has chewed. I didn't ask him, but I bet he's a big supporter of "adopt a dog".

I asked Diana about the salon services she offers at Hair Plus. Her choice of services includes color and styling, ear piecing (only ears), eyebrows, waxing, and "psychological counseling" (no charge for this last service). The majority of her clientele (70%) are women.

Diana considers every customer special. In fact, for long-time customers, if they, for any reason become house-bound, she has been known to go to their homes to take care of their salon needs. Speaking of special, I saw something in her shop that I've

never seen before – a miniature salon chair for children. Usually, a shop will simply have a “booster” for the child to use – in Hair Plus, they have their very own chair!

Steve and Diane spoke lovingly of East Greenwich, and how much they enjoy being part of the community. They both have customers who are the children of their early customers. In fact, Diane told me that one of her oldest clients, a woman in her nineties, recently passed way, and Diane went to the funeral home to style her hair

one last time at no charge. In fact, she often donates this service to families of loved ones who have passed away.

Colonial Shoe Repair and Hair Plus are both welcome reminders of Main Street past, when small local businesses knew their customers as neighbors and friends, and considered it a privilege to serve them.

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