



“I have always loved pretty things.

I grew up in the small town of Lake City and my mother had eight children. Fashion for us wasn’t really affordable back then. My mother made sure we looked decent, but I wore a lot of hand-me-downs and didn’t have a lot of the pretty things my friends did.

When I left home, I made sure to get a good job because I wanted to be able to wear what I wanted, eat what I wanted, and go where I wanted.

I loved dressing myself then and I also found that I loved dressing other women. The look that a woman has when they put something on that makes them feel special just makes me so excited.

Even when they have just lost a loved one, like so many people did this past year, and come into my store to buy something to wear for the funeral. I can see what it means to them to pick out that outfit.

It just puts the light back in their face.

The other reason I wanted to own a boutique was the hats. During slavery times, Black women couldn’t dress nicely during the week. The only time they could look and feel good was when they got dressed for church on Sundays. So on Sunday, they would put on their best finery and that included hats.

I remember my mother talking about that when I was a child. Because when I was a child, we used to wear gloves and a hat to church. That habit never left me, even after being away from the South for 36 years. When I came back people weren’t doing it as much, but once I opened the boutique, I saw a lot of people coming back to it.

And it’s not just people here in Florence. I have women drive as far as two, three hours to shop here for that special outfit.

Which it doesn’t even have to be a whole outfit. It can be a hat, or a brooch, or a necklace. Whatever makes them feel good.

And it in turn makes me feel good. My phone is full of photos from customers in the outfits they have bought from me and they’ll let me know about all the compliments they got.

Getting those always makes me smile.”

- Ella Frazier, owner of Ella’s Boutique