

# Local Business, Lace Silhouettes Lingerie

*celebrates 35 years of passion, panties, and perseverance*



By: Taylor Jackson

It all started in 1988 when Karen Thompson opened her first store, Lace Silhouettes Lingerie. Today, she has grown that business to nine stores across Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Thompson sat down with us to look back on her 35-year journey:

## Where did you go to high school?

Pennridge High School in Perkasio, Pennsylvania.

## What was your first job?

My first job was at a drug store in a local mall in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. I worked there through high school as a cashier. When I graduated high school, I knew I had a passion for fashion and took a job at Bamberger's Department store (now Macy's) in the Montgomery Mall. I started as a manager of the handbag department and then moved into buying.

Karen Thompson, Founder, Lace Silhouettes Lingerie est. 1988

*"... I've learned to keep calm and take things one day at a time ..."*

## Who are your biggest role models?

Definitely my family. My mom and dad always supported my dreams and taught me what it takes to run my own business. My grandmother was also a great role model. She saw my love for fashion at a young age and always pushed me to follow that passion. She even suggested I get into the buying field as a career after high school!

## Why did you decide to start your own business?

My mother and father started a trash company. So, growing up I was always surrounded by that entrepreneurial spirit. As a young woman, I always dreamed I would open a dress store.

## What was your mission at the start of your company?

To survive! When I began to seriously look into opening my own business, I read in an article that 8 out of 10 businesses fail. I opened my first store in 1988, right after the crash of 1987. I didn't know what was going to happen, but I decided to just go for it.

## What made you choose to start a company in the intimate apparel industry?

It was actually completely by chance. I was looking for opportunities, and my father-in-law suggested a bridal salon with multiple store extensions. It was known as "one-stop-shopping for the bride." There was a lease opening for the intimate apparel store, and I took it.

## How did you come up with the store's name Lace Silhouettes Lingerie?

I made two columns on a piece of paper. In the first column, I listed all of the words that came to mind when I thought of lingerie. The second was a list of the different styles of lingerie. I picked one word from each column.

## Why did you choose Peddler's Village to open your flagship store?

Again... completely by chance! I knew I wanted to grow and was focused on attracting more customers. A space opened up in Peddler's Village, and that's when I decided to move my lingerie store. I have been in Peddler's Village ever since. It wasn't always easy though. When I had my store with the bridal salon, and even when

I moved it to Peddler's Village, I was still working full time for a wholesale company in New York City. I commuted to that job during the week and managed Lace Silhouettes Lingerie on the weekends.

## What was it like running your own business while being a wife and mother to two boys?

Busy, busy, busy! I had to make a lot of sacrifices. I could not have done it without the love and support of my husband, Dave and my family.

## Were there any people who mentored you

## throughout your 35 years as a business owner?

Absolutely. My husband's parents had a big influence. They gave me a \$7,000 loan to open my first store back in 1988. They helped me get my business off the ground from the very beginning. I also learned a lot from Earl Jamison, the founder of Peddler's Village. He always kept an interest in my growth. At the time, I didn't realize how much I really learned from him. He would always ask me open-ended questions and guided me to the answers that ultimately helped me reach the next step.



Karen Thompson's team on International Women's Day 2023.



**What have been your biggest learning experiences in running a business?**

Flexibility was a big thing that I learned. As a business owner, you have to accept that life is unpredictable. You need to learn to persevere and pivot when you have to. Over the course of my 35-year journey, I have had to work through storms, recessions, and, most recently, a pandemic!

Don't be afraid to take risks, either. I currently have nine retail store locations; throughout my 35 years, I have had about 25 retail locations. Sometimes, it doesn't work out, but you have to keep pushing for the next opportunity.



*Karen Thompson and her husband Dave at the grand opening of her first store, Lace Silhouettes Lingerie, at the bridal salon in Fountainville, PA.*

I've learned to keep calm and take things one day at a time.

**What do you think is the key to your success?**

I wouldn't be where I am if I hadn't found

such an amazing team to learn and grow with me. I am lucky to have so many dedicated and professional staff members. The support from my family, children, and husband is also huge. They have been with me every step of the way.

**Do you have any advice for aspiring business owners?**

Passion. If you always stay passionate, you will always find a way.

**Do you have any exciting plans for the future?**

Growth. During the pandemic, my team and I were able to work on our craft. We became stronger by remaining still. I think that's important. You can always turn a negative into a positive. Now that we are moving past the pandemic, we are ready to grow.

I am also looking forward to continuing our community involvement. My team and I are very passionate about giving back to the local community and are always looking for ways to grow our philanthropic endeavors.

This is just the beginning. I want this company to reach 100 years and beyond. I won't be here, but the stores and the journey will be.



*Left: Karen Thompson when she relocated her store to Peddler's Village, where it remains open today.*

*Below: Lace Silhouettes Lingerie in Peddler's Village during its initial renovations.*



*"... If you always stay passionate, you will always find a way ..."*

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*bra refresh!*

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