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Real Estate

Oklahoma City designers seeing success

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Friendship and a love of design brought two Oklahoma City women together to start their own design firm more than two years ago and soon they will move into their own dedicated space.

Cynthia Harrison began Tandem Design Studio Inc. in March 2005 after working for several years at TAParchitecture. Within six months of starting Tandem, her friend and former classmate Bethany Jackson moved back to Oklahoma from Texas to join the company.

“I like to work in a collaborative environment and I needed a partner,” Harrison said. Harrison and Jackson met at the University of Oklahoma while both were pursuing bachelor’s degrees in interior design. After graduation in 1999, Harrison went to work and Jackson earned a master’s degree in construction science then headed to Dallas to work for Rees Associates.

The two-woman firm focuses on interior design, graphic design and marketing materials as well as many aspects of the overall look and feel of their projects.

“We don’t do just finishes or decoration,” Harrison said. “We’re very involved in the interior construction and any kind of special features that go into the interior.”

Since forming Tandem, the two have done design work in Oklahoma, Texas and California in areas from health care to corporate and residential projects.

Both women also credit much of their success to listening to the needs and of their clients rather than presenting designs that they dream up without the clients’ input.

Jackson said they like to tell clients that their ears are bigger than their egos.

“We really like to include our clients in the process” Jackson said. “We try to be good listeners and include other people’s ideas and input.”

When Harrison started the company she worked out of her garage at home for a short period. After that she moved into a space with J3 Architecture at 226 NE Second St. in Deep Deuce.

“Designers are just not introverted people” Harrison said. “By nature we need to be around other people and interacting and giving feedback and bouncing ideas off each other.”

Now, based on a need for more space and increased business, Tandem will move into its own space at 101 Park Ave. in October.

And despite long hours and the stress of running a small business, both women said starting the business was a great idea where they can share their vision and designs in projects around the country but especially in Oklahoma.

"This is the city that we grew up in," Harrison said. "We've seen it come so far in the past 20 years and we're so excited to be part of that."

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