

## Handlebar Toys Has New Owners

By Andrea A. Firth



Lance Ghulam and Sara Casey at work and at play at Handlebar Toys in Lafayette

Photo Andrea A. Firth

Lance Ghulam and Sara Casey are continuing to mind the shop, the shop being Handlebar Toys in Lafayette, which is something that they have been doing together for many years. The difference now is that Ghulam and Casey recently became the new owners of Handlebar Toys having purchased the store from the family of longtime proprietor Freda Challis who passed away in the spring.

“It was really like a passing of the baton,” explains Ghulam who started working at the toy store ten years ago as a temporary stint but

then never left. “We had talked about taking over the store for a while. It’s really how it was meant to be,” adds Casey, who started working at Handlebar 15 years ago while she was still in high school.

Lafayette natives and self-described best friends, Ghulam and Casey each bring a unique experience and perspective to their business venture. Ghulam’s many years of retail experience with the Disney Store has proven invaluable as he has worked to update the look of Handlebar Toys. And, Casey, who has a family of four children between 6

months and ten years of age, provides a real-world testing ground for new toys. “If it doesn’t work in Sara’s family, it won’t be in the store,” states Ghulam.

This toy store duo has no plans to tinker with the successful formula that Handlebar Toys has followed for the past four decades. “One thing will always stay the same,” states Ghulam, “We will always carry quality, hard-to-find toys. We will carry action figures and Barbie’s, but the bulk of our inventory will be toys that you won’t find at the [local discount retailer].”

However, Ghulam and Casey do plan to do more. They want to have special purchase days (where a percentage of sales receipts will be donated to local schools) and birthday clubs (that will help parents to buy the right gifts for the right kids). And, they continue to work on the store design and displays to create a more inviting shopping experience.

“We want to be more than just a toy store,” states Casey. “We want the store to be a destination—a place where both a child and a grown up can have a good time,” adds Ghulam finishing Casey’s thought as these best friends often do.