



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Steve Campbell

ARTISAN: Chris Duncan of Duncan and Clarke places diamonds in a setting for a ring he's making at his new jewelry shop in Warrenton.



Courtesy photo

NEARLY WEDS: Kevin Vedder and Jena McLellen work on their wedding rings at the Duncan and Clarke shop.

Duncan and Clarke offers wedding ring workshops

New jewelry shop specializes in customs designs

BY STEVE CAMPBELL
Times-Democrat Staff Writer

Kevin Vedder and Jena McLellen plan to walk down the aisle in a few weeks.

When they do, the rings they place on each others' fingers will hold even greater meaning for the couple.

The simple, yet elegant hand-crafted wedding bands will be extra special because they were made by the couple themselves at a new custom jewelry shop in Warrenton.

Duncan and Clarke specialize in unique handcrafted fine jewelry that reflects aesthetic balance and timeless designs, according to partners Chris Duncan and Steve Clarke.

Bride-to-be Jena is an active duty nurse at a hospital in Bethesda. Kevin works with the Army criminal investigation division in McLean.

They'd tried on rings at sev-

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Chris Duncan

eral shops in Northern Virginia but couldn't quite find one that matched Jena's engagement ring.

She heard about a jeweler in Warrenton from an Internet site that advertised custom-made jewelry.

They contacted Duncan and Clarke in Warrenton and learned that the shop offers wedding ring workshops targeted toward engaged couples.

“It's really an amazing experience,” Duncan said of the class.



Photo by Adam Goings

SILVER: Sterling silver is melted down so it can be formed into a custom piece.

“I give them some sparkling wine and provide them some lunch.”

The couple arrived in Warrenton at about 9:30 on a recent Saturday morning.

The project started out with a block of platinum for Jena's ring and a hunk of palladium for Kevin's. They chose palladium

for the groom's ring because its a stronger metal that can withstand abuse.

“The plan was, I would make her ring and she would make my ring,” Kevin said. “We were doing the majority of the work, but they were telling us how to do it.”

“We had their attention all day.”

Jena McLellen

Jena said, “I was a little hesitant at first because I've never done anything like this.”

Kevin, on the other hand, does woodworking, “so he really likes doing stuff with his hands,” she said.

“We had their attention all day,” Jena said. “We were the only people there. It was one-on-one personal attention that was nice.”

The icing on the wedding cake came when Duncan engraved the insides of the bands with the couple's initials, wedding date and wedding song.

Forging a partnership

Chris Duncan, who grew up in Delaplane, used to be a gemologist like his grandfather, who ran the Columbia School of

Gemology in Silver Spring, Md.

“I started out more as gemologist than a jeweler. Then I decided I like making jewelry more,” he said.

He worked side by side with 47-year-old Steve Clarke at another jeweler and the two decided the time had come to launch their own shop.

“When you work in a small room for years and years, you either love him or hate him, so it's a good partnership,” the 41-year-old Duncan said.

“We just want to sit and do what we love to do — sitting at the bench and making jewelry,” he said.

Clarke is part of the lineage of Master Jewelers from England. He learned jewelry crafting and manufacturing in London's Hatton Garden Jewelry District in the early 1980s and has worked in the U.S. as a jewelry designer and artisan since the early 1990s.

While talking, Duncan shows a pair of black jade stones, triangular in shape,

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