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**MEMBER PROFILE - JULY 2001**

## Amy Schoen

Amy Schoen, who has a degree in engineering and an M.B.A. from Georgetown University, was always interested in problem solving. Her early jobs involved strategic planning with high tech companies; however, she worked Saturdays in downtown fashion stores for a change of pace. Customers rapidly discovered that Amy had a good eye for color and style; Amy discovered that she liked retail work. Several managerial positions later, she learned how to run a business and focused her concentration on the petite woman.

Because she wears a petite size, Amy knows how difficult and frustrating it can be to find appropriate, reasonably-priced clothes which fit properly. "Petite is a function of height -- not weight," says Amy noting that salespeople often don't understand the needs of the woman who is 5'4" or under and who requires proportionally-sized clothing. For a long time, Amy shared these feelings of frustration with other small women, finally establishing her business, La Petite Classique, as a direct result of this frustration. Since 1990, this Bethesda boutique has improved the fashion situation for petite women all over the metro Washington area.

La Petite Classique offers petite women unique merchandise not found in area stores. The shop provides an extremely broad selection of clothing for all occasions for the woman who is 5'4" and under -- from "chic work suits to contemporary casual wear, cocktail attire, distinctive wearable art pieces and accessories that tie the entire look together." Amy stocks a wide range of styles that fit and flatter women of all petite sizes. She regularly travels to art fairs and has even had merchandise designed and custom-made specifically for customers. The store staff calls regular customers to let them know about new arrivals. Amy keeps files on her best customers and holds items before they go on the sales floor. She has trained her staff to provide exceptional personalized service and most customers find shopping at La Petite Classique an enjoyable experience.

Last year, Amy moved her shop from its original location on Woodmont Avenue to The Shoppes at Bethesda Row, 4844 Bethesda Avenue -- considered one of Bethesda's premier shopping areas. The new location, now 50% larger, offers expanded dressing room space, a specially-lit three way mirror, a wider range of sizes from 0 - 14, and a pleasant area for patrons to relax with a cool drink.

Amy became a WBO member over ten years ago, even before she opened her store, because she was looking for support and knowledge. "When you're alone out there, trying to strike out by yourself, you need a good support network of people with similar interests who understand your problems," says Amy, who calls WBO "an especially supportive group." She notes that she has used the professional capabilities of at least a dozen WBO women and recently found her manager through WBO. Amy loves what she does because it provides "control and independence -- and it's never boring!"