

## 'Stuff' for art lovers

Story, photo by Jessica Levine  
Wednesday Editor



SISTERS Casey and Sloane Simmons together run Stuff, an art shop in Brookside.

The name of their store developed by accident, but the heart and soul behind the name is intentional. When sisters Casey and Sloane Simmons sat down to think of a name for their store concept, the word "stuff" kept coming up in their descriptions. As a joke, they put it on the list of optional names, but it quickly rose to the top. It easily became representative of the store they envisioned. And when the dream became a reality, Stuff became the name they now laugh about.

The women are living some people's dream. They co-own a business, surround themselves in art every day, and have a congenial dog, Emma, as a companion. But though stepping inside the whimsical simplicity of the store is soul-quenching, the sisters have a definite mission in mind.

They believe that environments define a person. Their heart is in helping people find the "stuff" that makes their lives and homes extra-

STUFF, page 9

## • Sisters with lots of 'stuff'

From page 1

ordinarily personal. To do this, they research every item. They know how, where and when it was created. Their store offers original works from local, regional, national and international artists

Stuff's home is currently at 316 West 63rd Street in Brookside. But before May, it was in Westport, and even before that, on 47th Street. Actually, the idea for the business sparked years ago when the sisters were working together as political consultants. "We were traveling close to 250 days a year and it was hard," Sloane says. She wanted to start a family, and Casey, not yet married, wanted the chance to settle.

They began to show art in their offices. At first, the shows were free. But the immediate success became the light at the end of the corporate tunnel, and the idea for their store on 47th Street evolved.

They rented the small space close to Westport and had what Casey calls "the delusion that they could continue the art business part-time." They soon swam out of their dream world and realized that this was a full-time business. The concept took off, leading them to where they are today, back close to the neighborhood where they grew up.

Sloane says they've never really lived south of 47th Street. They grew up on one side of Loose Park, and they now live on the other side. They are both graduates of the Kansas City, Mo. School District and finished their time in the district at Southwest High School. Casey smiles and says they bought every school supply they ever needed at The Dime Store, and spent years walking and playing in the area. "We were Wornall kids," she says.

Ironically, and as if by fate, they've landed just a few doors down from the shop

they remember so fondly.

Today, the Simmons host eight catered art parties per year for featured artists. This allows the artists to meet their customers and the customers to finally match a face with the signature on their pieces. Though most of what they offer is not on canvas, it is still art in its rawest form. Sloane points out the handmade boxes that are hand-crafted, hand-painted, and then delivered to Stuff, where a customer's hands will eventually find the box, fall in love with it, and take it home.

Casey and Sloane Simmons are sisters of another kind. They are best friends, partners and confidantes. And even if the farthest distance between them is from one wall of the store to the other, they communicate non-verbally. They smile at each other and raise their eyebrows. They know what the other is thinking. Perhaps they are congratulating each other silently, or