Another jewel in Crowley's crown

Ms. Charlotte’s claims state business honor

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CROWLEY — It started off as a way to make a living during a slump in the oil field and now it is a way of life.

Charlotte Jeffers, owner of Ms. Charlotte's Gift Shop the past 13 years, has been named the Small Business Person of the Year for District 4, which includes Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion parishes. In April, district winners will be recognized and a state winner will be named.

“I am a small business and I enjoy being a small business,” Jeffers said. “I serve family and friends and like the personalized service my shop provides.”

Crowley Mayor Isabella delaHoussaye nominated Jeffers for the award.

“She is very deserving of the award,” delaHoussaye said. “She is an aggressive businesswoman, the type of person that any community would be lucky to have.”

Jeffers, delaHoussaye said, is also active in the community.

“I have watched her operate her business and have seen the enthusiasm she generates,” the mayor said. Her involvement includes chairmanship of Crowley's Small Business Promotion program.

Charlotte Jeffers, owner of Ms. Charlotte's Gift Shop, and her dog, Maggie, watch the counter of the Crowley business. Jeffers has been named a state Small Business Person of the Year.

FrancoFête '99 committee, president of the Crowley Main Street USA Board of Directors, member of Crowley Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the Crowley CARES retail promotion program and a member of the city's Street Scape program.

“One of those positions would be enough for one person but she has the ability to do a lot of things and do them all well,” delaHoussaye said. “This honor is just another sign that Crowley is an aggressive city with intelligent, capable business people helping us grow. Charlotte is another jewel in Crowley’s crown.”

Jeffers said she became involved in business by accident.

“We started it because the oil field was going to nothing and my husband said we needed some money to live,” said Jeffers, of her medium-priced gift and fashion jewelry shop.

She began her business in 1986 as a Six Star franchise. “That lasted for three years and then the franchise went broke,” she said. “We stayed on and got away from the dollar store look and went more to a gift shop.”

In 1994, Jeffers expanded to another building. She contacted Howard Duson, who owns her current building in downtown Crowley.

“He was just a doll,” she said of Duson. “It took three months to renovate the building.”

It was completed in October of 1994 and Ms. Charlotte's was born.

Jeffers said being a small-business owner is not easy.

“There are so many things against you,” she said of starting a small business. “We fight corporations, we are fighting Lafayette and now we are fighting the Internet.”

Currently, the store has family members working part-time.

Her advice to aspiring businesses is: “If you like it and that is what you like to do, do it. Personal service has kept us alive.”