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Independent jewelers, including some shops handed down through generations, test their mettle outside of malls

Central Tucson is studded with independent jewelers linked by a love of craftsmanship. Here are a few:

Perri Jewelers, 13 N. Stone Ave., (520) 624-4311

Stephen Perri didn't plan to get into the family business, but he found it had its charms. It started with his uncle in 1945.

"Uncle Peter was a watchmaker. My father was a hand engraver. He bought the business from Peter in 1957," said Stephen Perri, a teacher at Salpointe Catholic High School.

But about a year ago, his father, Simon Perri, suffered a stroke and the business at 37 W. Congress St. was closed. The plan was to liquidate the inventory, move the equipment and abandon the business.

"I'm a teacher, and my two sisters live out of town," he said. And the old location needed a costly renovation. But when he took a semester off from teaching to complete the tasks, he changed his mind. "My sisters and I started working here when we were teenagers.

"Until Dad's stroke, he was the last hand engraver I know of in town," Perri said. "People kept telling me not to close the business."

A small, nearby storefront was vacant, and Perri decided to move in. He repairs jewelry, sets stones, sizes rings and repairs quartz watches. He hired a professional watchmaker for other timepieces.

"Our clientele is here," he said of the decision to stay in the area. "If we were not going to stay downtown, we would not have stayed in business.

"We opened here June 11. We're a lot smaller than before, but we're open."

