



# Rhode Island Success Story

## Good Feet Store

*Smithfield, Rhode Island*

After working in the corporate world for more than 20 years, Jeanine Vigeant decided she wanted to work for herself. She began searching for ideas and wanted to find a product or service that would help people. She found it in Good Feet.

Arthritic knees were causing her considerable pain and swelling while exercising. A friend told her about the Good Feet Store. The arch supports she purchased there provided instant relief. That was the beginning of her entrepreneurial journey.

Jeanine acquired the Rhode Island and Connecticut territory from Good Feet and relocated from San Diego, California to Rhode Island in March 2001. It was a homecoming of sorts since Jeanine is a Massachusetts native.

"People typically come to The Good Feet Store with tired feet, sore legs, sore back and total body discomfort," said Vigeant. "Nearly 87 percent of the population suffers from foot related problems, most of which are caused by wearing improper footwear, walking on hard surfaces for long periods of time, being overweight or sports injuries," Jeannine added.

By the summer she opened her Good Feet store on South Main Street in Providence. Jeannine soon realized that the old adage about location, location, location was exactly right. Parking was not adequate and customers had a difficult time reaching her store. Sales were sagging and the tragic events on September 11, 2001 didn't help sales. Jeannine knew that she had to do something soon or face the possibility of going out of business.

Jeanine began a search for a better location and soon found a store near the Apple Valley Mall in Smithfield. She secured a \$25,000 SBA MicroLoan through the Rhode Island Coalition for Minority Investment and opened at the new location in December 2001. Vigeant was also able to get out of her lease at the South Main Street store, which made the relocation much easier.

The move did not solve the sales problem immediately. Sales at the end of January were just \$22,000. She attended a Good Feet conference in California and came back energized. Sales soon soared and by the end of April 2002 totaled \$64,000 for the month and was named the Good Feet Dealer of the Month.

By mid-May, Vigeant opened her second store in Groton, CT, using the profits from her Smithfield store. The Connecticut store was an instant success and in October 2002, Jeanine opened her third store on Route 6 in Seekonk, MA, once again using the profits from her Rhode Island and Connecticut stores to fund the operation.



Jeanine Vigeant, (right) demonstrates the importance of proper foot alignment to a customer.

Jeanine has done so well that in November 2002 the Good Feet Corporation named her the 2002 Dealer of the Year.

Vigeant said that it would have been easy to give up when her business didn't meet expectations at first. But she believed in her product and that made the difference.

Good Feet products were designed by an expert team of foot specialists and researchers, and are worn, approved and recommended by chiropractors, podiatrists and doctors. The products help people from all walks of life - firemen, police officers, postal workers, nurses and teachers. They fit well in tennis shoes, sneakers, basketball shoes, dress shoes, slippers, boots, and high heels—footwear of all types.

"If your feet are not properly balancing your body weight, the rest of your skeletal structure becomes misaligned," Jeanine said. "However, when your feet are correctly positioned, your skeletal structure is in proper alignment and your body weight is better balanced, giving you the benefits of comfort, balance and support," Vigeant added.

Jeanine said she doesn't want to grow too fast. She will soon open a satellite store near the East Bay bike path in Barrington, RI to support the Seekonk store. Meanwhile, she continues to look at other locations in the area for the next Good Feet store location.

