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Working It: Christine Pickrell

by Aly McPhee

Have you ever fantasized about living the glamorous the life of a florist?

Christine Pickrell will tell you that contrary to popular assumption being a florist is not an easy job, but now that she's in it, she can't imagine doing anything else. Christine explored a few other career paths before getting involved in the family business, founded in 1962 by her father, George and mother, Dora. At first she and her aching feet couldn't stand it, but now she feels lucky to be surrounded by beauty every day, and to be able to work with her three brothers, who can always count on each other as partners. David, Peter, Steve, Christine and their cousin Danny are now celebrating **Westmount Florist's** 50 fabulous years of business. We caught up with Christine at the Victoria avenue location to discover the myths and realities of being a florist.

What's the best part of your job?

Every day is different and you never get sick of opening a new shipment of flowers, no matter how many of them you've seen. You also get to share a lot of things with people, both the good and the bad. You develop a very personal relationship with your clients. It's amazing to be part of all of the milestones in their lives; you get to be there when they have children, and then be part of the wedding when those kids grow up and get married. My father always told me "you'll never be a millionaire but you'll love what you do and you'll meet the nicest people."



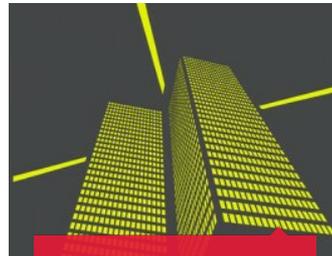
Christine Pickrell of Westmount Florist.

What is the worst part of your job?

The hours. You miss out on a lot of stuff because you're always working during holidays. I remember when I graduated, my parents were at work because it was mother's day. I would be sitting by the window on Christmas Eve waiting for them to come home. Now that I'm in it, I get it.

What is one of the coolest events you've ever been involved with?

In 2010 I took part in "A Closet Affair" fashion show to benefit **Alzheimer Groupe Inc (AGI)**. Stylists were paired with Montreal personalities and I worked with Montreal designer Helmer Joseph. When I introduced myself to him, I told him that I had always wanted to wear a dress made of flowers and his eyes lit up. He set to work creating the frame and I spent hours gluing over a thousand fresh orchids to the dress the day before the event. It was a pleasure to work with such a talented designer, while raising money for a great cause. We also created another floral dress



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What are some of the biggest floral trends this season?

The "Downton Abbey effect" is very popular in England right now and will make its way to Canada soon. Over the last 8 or 9 years, the tight, compact arrangement look has been popular, but arrangements are now getting more loose and "gardeny." Keep an eye out for more natural, old-fashioned and wild looking arrangements.

What's the most romantic order you've ever received?

One guy had a dozen roses delivered every hour to his girlfriend on Valentine's day.

What I find the most romantic is when a guy comes in to the store with his groceries in hand, and you can see the bread and wine sticking out of his bag. I think it's very romantic that he's cooking dinner for his wife, and he thought of all the details, including picking up flowers as the final finishing touch.

What do you love most about Montreal?

It's like a mini New York. It has lots of action and there's always something to do. I love being downtown and hearing the diversity of French and English.

I love Montreal in the summer, I think our festivals and restaurants are phenomenal. I was born and raised here, and it will always be home.

Do all of the Habs buy their flowers from you?

PK Subban buys his flowers from us, and Alex Kovalev was a good customer when he was in Montreal. We've done a lot of flowers for celebrities such as Bradley Cooper, Julia Roberts, Rhianna and Madonna when they're in town. We are always discreet and don't publicize that information when it's happening to protect their privacy. We've also done a lot of high profile weddings such as Justin Trudeau's.

Complete this sentence: You know you're in Montreal when...

You hit a pothole.

Westmount Florist, 360 Victoria Avenue, Westmount, Quebec, 514-488-9121 and 343 Ch. Lakeshore Rd., Pointe-Claire Village, Quebec, 514-697-5858, www.westmountflorist.com

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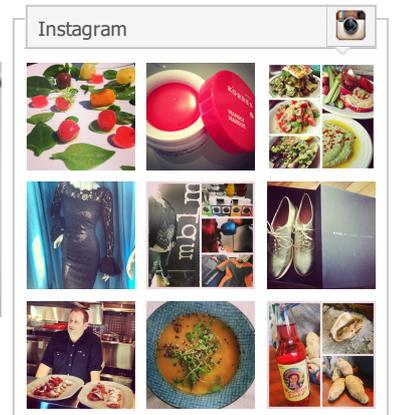
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