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Through 3 generations, the Colavolpes display flair for window treatments ALL IN THE FAMILY

Andy Shapiro Special to the Register

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Standard Window Shade is celebrating its 85th anniversary this year, and while the world and the industry have changed in many ways since the business' inception, the company remains family owned and operated. Third-generation owner Ralph Colavolpe said Standard Window Shade has deep roots in the area and is the oldest family-owned window treatment business in the state.

"When my grandfather, Vincenzo, came over from Italy, he established the company in 1923 with my grandmother, Lucy," said Colavolpe. "My grandmother's brother was actually Frank Pepe. He went into the pizza business, and my grandparents went into the window treatment business."

The company has offices in East Haven and Old Lyme.

When it was founded, the company was a husband-and-wife team, and it remains so today, as Colavolpe works with his wife of 14 years, Anni. The two met through their respective jobs at the time, said Anni Colavolpe.

"I was working as a hairdresser, and my salon was next to his shop in a duplex," she said. "I've now been helping Ralph for seven or eight years."

Colavolpe took over the company while still in high school in 1977 when his father, Ralph Sr., died suddenly.

Colavolpe said the business has changed quite a bit since it began.

"My grandparents based the business originally on making green window shades for security purposes during the war," Colavolpe said. "Now what we do is more for decorating."

Anni Colavolpe agreed, explaining how shades have changed. "Back then they only had roller shades," she said. "Today they'd be shocked at the types of shades they have now."

In addition to installation, Standard Window Shade ships blinds, shades and shutters all over the world from its Web site.

"Our main goal is to make the customer happy," he said.

"We've had no problems ever after our window treatments.

We don't take a deposit from anyone, and we're not paid until the job is done."

Another priority for Standard Window Shade is giving back to the less fortunate in Connecticut, said Colavolpe.

"We like to give back to the community by supporting things like the New London Soup Kitchen, the Connecticut Food Bank and the United Way, among others," he said.

Standard Window Shade has been passed down from father to son for three generations, and while the Colavolpes have no children, they plan to still keep it in the family.

Said Colavolpe: "Hopefully, a niece or nephew will take it over."

Andy Shapiro is a Register intern.

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