

Jeweler first from El Paso to lead state trade group

By Sara Sanchez / El Paso Inc. staff writer
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Susan Eisen is the first El Pasoan to be president of the Texas Jewelers Association.

Photo by Sara Sanchez

Susan Eisen is using her creativity as the leader of the country's largest jewelry association.

Eisen, the owner of Susan Eisen Fine Jewelry & Watches on the Westside, is working through a three-year term as president of the Texas Jewelers Association.

The association was founded in 1906, and she is its first president from El Paso.

“It’s a big job and takes a lot of effort. And we’re all volunteers,” Eisen said. “It’s like having another store for three years.”

Eisen said her term as board president was extended by a year due to the pandemic.

Earlier this year, Eisen planned and led the association’s Round Up, a two-day event that took members around Dallas for behind-the-scenes visits to museums and jewelry crafters.

The visit included a tour of the gem and minerals hall of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, and a stop at Time Delay, which makes watch accessories.

She said the tour required plenty of planning and logistics and involved other association members, including retail store owners, vendors, and members from Jewelers of America and Jewelers Mutual, an insurance group.

“First I was met with a little bit of pessimism, but in the end, everyone agreed that it was a good idea and it was worth trying,” Eisen said.

Eisen, who opened her business in 1980, said the last couple of years as the association’s president have been very busy. As president, she oversees the publishing of two magazines and works on the annual convention.

The association is a nonprofit that Texas jewelers can join. Membership requires certification exams and maintaining credentials. Members are scattered across Texas, but the majority are in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Austin and Houston.

El Paso’s jewelry market is not as big as large Texas cities like Dallas, Austin and Houston, Eisen said. The market is made up of a mix of retail stores, including chains, boutiques and sole owners. “Because of the border, I wouldn’t say it’s that different. Although we do sell things like Mexican coins, things that other cities might not sell,” she said.

The price of precious metals is always fluctuating, and Eisen said she keeps current on the market every day. In 42 years of business, she’s seen gold fluctuate from \$150 to \$2,000 per ounce.

“It’s like buying stocks. You really don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow,” Eisen said. “Russia could dump millions of ounces of gold on the market to pay for their war efforts and it could make the price drop. Or they could withhold and change the market. It’s based on political, banking and financial things that nobody really can predict.”

Like every other industry, the pandemic ushered in many changes, and Eisen said the internet played a big part.

“We’re on the right track just like everyone else,” Eisen said. “As far as the last three years, I’m very pleased with the success of the store. We do have the same problems of finding sophisticated and professional staff.”

She said the pandemic prompted her and other jewelers to increase their online efforts to reach customers who were not coming into retail shops as much. The internet also helped jewelers access more industry knowledge that would usually cost more time and money.

“We have so many wonderful webinars now,” Eisen said. “We used to go to conventions that cost thousands of dollars with hotel, air, registration. Now there are so many good Zoom meetings and seminars.”

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