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## Courage Is A Seed Curtailed By Comfort

The Falls Flowers / Vault + Vine Story



Peicha Chang at Falls Flowers in East Falls

Falls Flowers, a boutique flower shop in East Falls, is changing its name to Vault + Vine.

Meant to convey the image of a treasure trove brimming with a living, rotating array of special, unique, and beautiful items, the new name is not the only forthcoming change. In March, Falls Flowers announced that they bought a new building and are adding a café and greenhouse. As they prepare to grow, the image of the vine is befitting, because although some are inclined to consider the vine to be obtrusive, Peicha Chang, Falls Flowers owner and founder, prefers to view the trailing plant as a reminder to continue reaching out, testing one's potential.

This is exactly what Peicha did several years ago when she walked into a flower shop on a Monday. It was her day off from managing a local crepe

shop in Cambridge, MA. Not wanting to spend her time away from work dawdling around town or her apartment, she went out looking for a constructive way to structure her leisure time.

“I walked in on a whim and just said, ‘I don’t need any money. I just need something to do,’” said Peicha.

Peicha was willing to do any task that was helpful—taking out trash, cleaning flowers, and tending to the shop. Years later, the owner of the shop confessed to Peicha that she had received many similar requests over the years and never obliged willing volunteers. But in Peicha’s case, the shop owner opened her doors to her.

“She told me, ‘I don’t know why I said yes, but I’m glad I did,’” said Peicha.

Peicha volunteered one day a week and that’s how she started her journey in the flower business. Paying jobs came and went, but Peicha continued volunteering on her days off until one day, a job became available at the shop and her official training in the world of floral retail began.

Retail display at Falls Flowers filled with goods from local artisans

Wanting to pursue an opportunity in a new place that offered room to grow and develop, Peicha and her husband left Cambridge and landed in East Falls. “We found [the neighborhood] by chance. We loved the prox-

imity to Center City, but we also loved that it was still somewhat removed from the downtown environment—it’s really accessible from all angles,” said Peicha. They found a house they loved and began to put down roots. To her, Philadelphia was receptive and approachable for someone who wanted to take an idea and turn it into a reality. After examining the market, she realized that there was not a flower shop similar in concept to the idea that she had in mind, so her and her husband decided to “just give it a go.” The business began as a stall in a market area in East Falls.

“I spent the first year feeling very broke trying to figure out what I was doing,” admits Peicha.

Now, in their brick and mortar location, people will often comment that Falls Flowers—intentionally designed to highlight their unique, rustic charm and whimsy—reminds them of a store that one would find in Center City. But for Peicha, living and working in the same neighborhood is important to her.

For years, East Falls has been perpetually *on the rise*. “It’s been interesting for me as a business owner and resident,” said Peicha. “What is it that is keeping us at this stage, what’s missing, and where is the tipping point?” One thing that was missing: a coffee shop that could serve as a gathering place for neighbors. Realizing her ability to create welcoming, vibrant settings and wanting to find a way to draw people into her store on a daily basis, Peicha realized that she could not wait for someone else to open up a shop. She had to green-light the idea, face any apprehensions head-on, and start thinking about how to converge her current business with her vision to create a space for the community to convene.

Coming to terms with the fact that most likely she was the one to undertake this project, Peicha recalled a running joke between her and her husband:

*“Are we comfortable? No? Okay, keep going. Are we comfortable? Yes? Okay, time to move on.”*

And in this case, with this new venture, she answered the call, but had no idea where this road would lead.

When I ask Peicha if she felt any resistance about being the one to do this, she replied:

“Yea—I am of two minds. I’m an introvert. Sometimes, I prefer to stay in my little bubble, sit on my couch, and read a book. But I also recognize the need for connection, to be around people, and to meet people. For me, the whole impetus to open a business that had a retail end that put me front-facing on a regular basis was really important because I knew that I had to force myself into that. Right now, it’s becoming more important to welcome that side of me that sees a gap or imagines a way to do business and has the confidence to say, **‘it’s me—I’ll do it.’**”

This attitude does not just apply to Falls Flowers’ new venture, but this way of thinking also relates to Peicha’s vision for employee care and talent retention / attraction. It is important to her that her business can offer benefits to employees, pay them a living wage, and give them control of their careers and life—and so she does just that.

Peicha and two members of her team at Falls Flowers

“I see my job more as a personal development position rather than being a boss,” said Peicha. “I took the Gallup Strength Finder and discovered that one of my top strengths is demonstrated in the role of *developer*. That

means that I am always looking for ways to develop others, systems, and processes.”

As the world’s first B-corps florist, Falls Flowers continues to set an example for the fact that you can engage in good business and *keep the lights on*.

And as we talk about her business practices, applications for two new positions rapidly roll in, even though the job opportunity was just posted hours before. Engaging in good business practices is a way to attract talent, Peicha confirmed.

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The Falls Flowers story should encourage entrepreneurs and business owners who need an extra push to put their principles into practice. It also serves to embolden those of us who are more naturally reserved or reticent, but who have great ideas and are able to embrace silence enough to spot possibilities, both for business and for community.

As Falls Flowers grows and blooms into Vault + Vine, Peicha, her team, and their story will be more visible. My hope is that spotlight will encourage business owners who think beyond business as usual; individuals who embrace discomfort, find power in their introversion, welcome uncertainty, plant seeds, and bring life to their communities—**those who complement creativity with courage.**

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Vault + Vine will be a combined florist, café, greenhouse, and locally-focused gift shop. The new 4,600 square foot location will be at 3507 Midvale Avenue. [Subscribe](#) to Falls Flowers' mailing list to be the first to know about the new opening date.

And also, if you were at SustainaBall, the Sustainable Business Network's annual fundraiser and gala, you have already had a taste of the beautiful displays that Falls Flowers is known for. View photos from the event [here](#).

