

## “I just turn on a dime and go”: Rosa Mann & The Ivy Trellis

Rosa Mann is no stranger to extraordinary circumstances. At three years old, she fled Cuba with her mother: “Like all good Cuban refugees, you go to Miami,” says Rosa, “And like a lot of Cuban refugees, you stay there until your family’s reunited.” Her older sisters had gone before, as part of Operation Peter Pan—her dad followed later. “We actually came March 12, and I remember because it’s the day I opened my store, too, and it’s my parents’ wedding anniversary.” Once reunited, Rosa’s family spent a year in New Jersey; by the time Rosa was five or six, they were in Virginia, and she’s lived in Virginia ever since.

The daughter of a professor (her mom) and an engineer (her dad), Rosa earned a degree in teaching. She had lots of different jobs before, inspired by her namesake and godmother, she decided to open her own shop: The Ivy Trellis. “My store was always going to be...a little boutique for children’s clothing,” Rosa says. “My daughter was about five when I opened the store, and I just happened to be redoing her bedroom right before I started ordering inventory, and I could not find anything I liked—I mean, nothing, no window treatments, no bedding, accessories.” She “turned on a dime,” and The Ivy Trellis went from being a children’s boutique to home décor. It opened in Farmville in 1994—but there were more turns to come.

Rosa had a store website as early as 2005; by 2010, she and her husband were avid sailors, driving hours every weekend to Deltaville (where the Rappahannock empties into the Chesapeake Bay) and back. “I just decided, gosh, I’d really like to have more time to do that...one day when we were coming home from Deltaville, I said, I think I’m gonna close the store, just do online for a while, and just go sailing.” So The Ivy Trellis was online only for eight years. Before long, though, Rosa started missing her people, “my Trellis girls, women that have been with me, literally, some for fifteen years.” This is where Williamsburg comes in — Rosa and her husband had bought a timeshare in the nineties, before The Ivy Trellis opened, and liked to visit once or twice a year. After spending a weekend with friends who had just bought a home in New Town, “we put the house on the market like, two days later,” says Rosa. “We don’t wait. Life’s too short. You make a decision, you go with it.”

And so The Ivy Trellis reopened as a brick-and-mortar store—first in Lightfoot Crossing in April 2018, and again in New Town in 2019. All told, Rosa and her store have been in business for twenty-six years. But once again, though she has her website ([trellisgifts.com](http://trellisgifts.com)) to fall back on, Rosa misses her people. “I have always told all the girls that have worked for me that I want people to feel like when they come in here, they’re coming because we invited them and we’re hosting a little cocktail party in the back,” she says. The party’s on hold for now, but Rosa is optimistic, and waiting for the day it can (safely!) resume.

Brought to you by New Town Williamsburg—stay home, stay safe, support local business. Kit Arbuckle reporting for the New Town Commercial Association (edition 20.6)