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Miniroo offers high-end baby goods

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Staff writer

When Tim Bergeron and his children were searching for a location to open a store for high-end baby goods, Bergeron had a simple request. He wanted the store to be near a Wegmans Food Market.

"I love Wegmans," said Bergeron, chairman of Bergeron Cos. of Dolgeville, Herkimer County. "People who shop there seem to love the idea of shopping at Wegmans. I want us to be the Wegmans of the baby gear market."

Miniroo opened for business in Perinton in December and will celebrate a formal grand opening March 29. Katie Peglow of Perinton, Bergeron's daughter and the manager of Miniroo, said they're going for a specific niche in the baby goods market, which she described as high-quality "gift and gear."

While other local baby-goods boutiques such as Simons or the Rugged Bear focus on furniture or apparel, the Bergeron Cos. are trying to establish Miniroo's identity as an outlet for specialty items from high-end manufacturers.

These include a \$400 Bloom high chair that can be used from babyhood to the start of the school-age years; a \$198 Baby Kaed diaper bag with a laptop compartment and "drawstring mess bag"; and MiYim stuffed animals made with organic materials that sell for about \$30.

"There isn't another place in Rochester that offers some of the products we have," Peglow said. "Nobody else takes it to this level."

Offerings also include the Keekaroo brand high chair and stroller designed by Rochester Institute of Technology graduate Ross Nadeau, an employee of Bergeron Cos.

The Miniroo store is just one component of a business plan to grow a nationwide market with its Internet site.

Miniroo also represents the Bergeron Cos. entry into the mainstream juvenile market. Tim Bergeron, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, started his career designing seating systems for special needs children. The company started moving into the mainstream market after discovering the Keekaroo high chair, which can be used as a school desk for special needs children, was gaining popularity among parents of mainstream children, Peglow said.

The Bergeron Cos. are entering an industry with a lot of challenges, said RIT professor Bob Barbato, who owned a USA Baby franchise in Henrietta in the 1980s and '90s. The store went out of business a few years after he sold it, as did other local baby-supply stores. "They're going to have to broaden their base on the Internet because there just aren't a lot of babies born in Rochester every year," he said.

Peglow said she's confident Mini-roo can carve out its own place on the local and national scene. "The items we offer will set us apart. And the Internet gives us national exposure," she said.

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