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RETAILING

Gold Boom Fuels Local Biz Growth

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The rise of the price of gold has been a lift for one local businessman, whose business has grown steadily since he landed in the industry in 2009.

Todd Melet had previously been in a business that serviced daily newspapers and had a side gig shooting sports, especially men's basketball games at UNC-Chapel Hill. But with daily newspapers cratering, he returned to something he'd done as a kid, when he worked at a coin shop and later made some real money in the coin business in college.

He opened his first JewelRecycle store in Chapel Hill in 2010 and three more stores followed shortly after that.

At the start of 2010, an ounce of gold cost \$1,116. By December 2022, that price was \$1,797. Since then, gold has skyrocketed, topping \$5,000 an ounce this year and settling in at above \$4,500.

"Basically it's been a straight line up," Melet said.

Melet's business has jumped 400% since 2022 and annual revenue is nearly \$43 million.

"We are in a tough business that has a lot of the same customer perception as a used car salesman," he said. "We are probably in the same category when people think of a gold buyer or a pawn shop."



The JewelRecycle location in Midtown Raleigh.

JewelRecyclers buys tea sets, coin sets and diamond rings, which often come with sad backgrounds and aren't always carrying the value customers want.

"We deliver that in a transparent way," he said. "The truth hurts sometimes."

But gold is hot, and the headlines about it get people intrigued to see what their jewelry and such is worth.

"It's not like 'Pawn Stars.' ... We don't ever ask, 'How much do you want for this?'" Melet said. "We educate them on what it's worth and what we can pay for it. ... And then we make the offer and it's accepted or its not."

Melet said 90% of their clients are not desperate for money, unlike the common view of a pawn shop. Instead, many are downsizing, divorcing or decluttering and looking to cash in.

Much of what JewelRecycle buys is melted down elsewhere and returned to the commodities market.

The surge in revenue has Melet, with 25 employees, looking to expand again. He's looking for a place now in Wake Forest and will keep looking across the Southeast after that.

"We hope to get to 20 locations in three to five years – will probably take five," he said.