

# Twins keep their clients in stitches

BY JOAN TUPPONCE  
Special Correspondent

**S**usan Morrison calls Rich's Stitches Inc. whenever she needs embroidered gifts and giveaways for her company.

Morrison, senior vice president of Dorsey, Wright & Associates, an investment research company based in Richmond, orders a variety of items several times a year.

"Each of our orders runs around 150 pieces," she said. "We usually order at least three different items. We've been working with Rich's Stitches since the early to mid-1990s."

Morrison's purchases range from embroidered jackets to promotional items such as pens and notebooks with her company's logo.

"Their work is excellent and they stand behind it," she said. "They are wonderful to deal with. They are a class act."

Identical twins Cecilia and Chris Rich opened Rich's Stitches, an embroidery, screen-printing and ad specialty company, in 1988 in the basement of their brother's home on Hawthorne Avenue in Richmond.

Before opening the business, Chris worked for sporting-goods company C.P. Dean, and Cecilia worked for what is now Anthem. The two had talked about building a business together but didn't act upon it until Chris saw a growing need for

## Rich's Stitches Inc.

**What is it?:** An embroidery, screen printing and ad specialty company

**Employees:** Three part-time employees and the owners

**Owners:** Cecilia and Chris Rich

**Location:** 4013 MacArthur Ave.

**Contact:** (804) 262-3477;  
[www.richsstitches.com](http://www.richsstitches.com)

custom embroidery work.

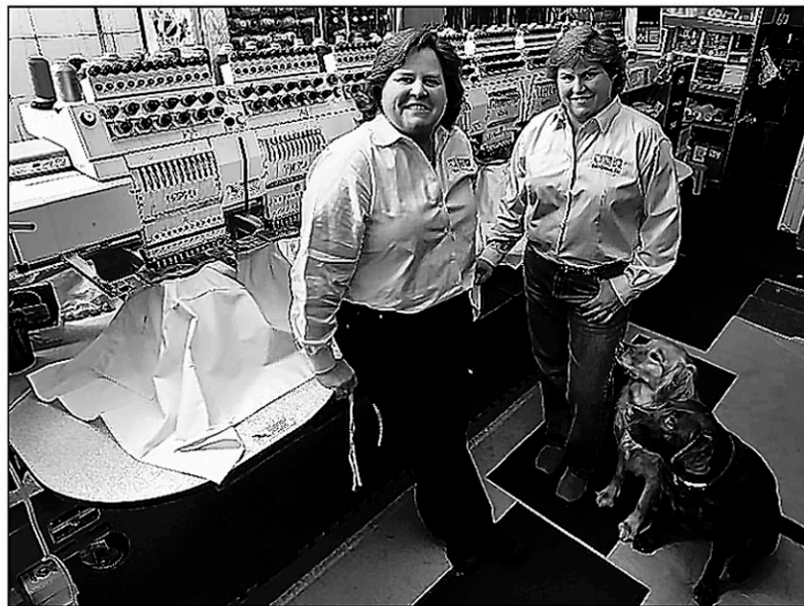
The two complement each other, they say. Cecilia is artistic and creative as well as mechanically inclined. Chris enjoys working with sales.

Both women had to teach themselves to create embroidery — neither had sewed a great deal in the past. They started with a four-head machine that embroidered four items at a time. Today they have an eight-head machine that churns out twice as many items in the same amount of time.

By 1993, the business grew so much that the twins moved to 4013 MacArthur Ave., their current location.

"We ran out of room," Chris said about the previous location. "We loved the neighborhood and wanted to stay here. We saw this row of shops and we took the plunge."

Since their move, the sisters say, the demand for embroidered items has exploded.



MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH

**Identical twins Chris (left) and Cecilia Rich (with dogs Cody and Odie) opened Rich's Stitches in 1988.**

"They researched it and came up with four different samples," he said. "We picked one out and ordered about \$1,200 worth of bags. Their price is right and they have service you can't beat."

The women are hoping to expand the business even further. Last year they started working with business coach Bill Keeler of AdviCoach as a way to create a 10-year business plan.

"We want to look for an outside salesperson," Chris said.

In working with the sisters, Keeler found that the women believe they need to earn the business of their customers.

"They work on a human level to achieve that," he said. "They are genuine, straightforward, honest people. Their business is high in repeat business, and that's because of their personal manner. You don't find that human touch so much in today's hustle-and-bustle world."

Over the years, the twins added several services that include screen printing and making banners, signs and promotional items. Customers include businesses, sport teams, clubs and associations.

In the past 15 years, Rich's Stitches has seen sales grow about 15 percent to 20 percent each year.

Bob Kocher, owner of the Once Upon a Vine wine store, has bought embroidered polo shirts as well as dress shirts from the twins.

"Chris and Cecilia are very easy to work with," he said. "They want to please you and do everything right from the start."

When Kocher wanted to create wine bags with a company logo, he talked with the sisters about his idea.