

Place to Buy a Futon

The Rubber Match

101 Whalley Ave.
New Haven, CT
6248410
www.rubbermatch.com

In business since: 1973 Stopped by for the interview: Owner George Zito How'd you get the idea to start this business? I'd just quit my job and saw Group W bench [a head shop on Edgewood Avenue]. Group W Bench was a name the owner got from the song "Alice's Restaurant." The owner wanted to sell me the name for \$6,000. I said, "I don't need the name, and all you got is mouse droppings on the shelves. I'll buy it for \$1,500." A friend wanted to open a coffeehouse and call it the Rubber Match. I asked him if I could have the name instead. When my daughter was



George Zito



born, I asked him for advice on naming her, too. What do you like most about your line of work? Remember one thing: If you go to work in the morning and you don't have a pit in your stomach, you're doing the right thing. That's how I feel. Plus, I get to help out people in the neighborhood. I'm like the Godfather. What's your favorite thing about New Haven? The people—it's like a mini New York. All kinds of different people come here, and I get to build a rapport with all of them. It makes me feel good inside. Who are your favorite customers? Everybody! Students! I like a customer that's been shopping around already, the ones who say, "We looked at every place in town, and you're the nicest guy we've talked to, so we're going to buy from you." What makes your business the best of its kind in New Haven? Let the person make their own decision. Don't be hungry. I believe in selling the customer what they need. My son and I were driving by IKEA. He said, "I can't believe you made best futon store, and beat IKEA." My reply was, "Son, good things come in small packages." If you could magically change jobs and be in another line of work, what would it be? I'd love to trade places with Tony Soprano. Do you play music in your store? What kind? I play WPLR, classic rock. WYBC—soul music. You catch the girls bebopping in. Are there any changes coming in your business in the year to come? We're expanding our covers, getting newer styles from California. The arms change, the frames change—they're getting more diverse. California's a real trendsetter.