

City-loving twins wear their hearts on their sleeves (and chests)

By Kara Beightel

Even though they grew up in Creve Coeur, Jeff and Randy Vines will tell you that they are probably the biggest boosters of the city of St. Louis has. While the twins were attending Parkway North High School, they'd take every spare minute to drive east on Highway "Farty" to hang out in the city.

"Anyone who knows us will tell you that we have always been passionate about the city," Jeff says.

So after graduating from high school, it seemed natural for the twins to not only move into the city — Randy to the Central West End and Jeff to the Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood — but to do what they could to pay homage to the city they love.

Enter STL-Style, the Vines' clothing company that features T-shirts bearing St. Louis-inspired images and messages, from "Highway Farty" to "East of Skinker." The twins launched their most recent line of shirts at a party June 17, their 27th birthday. They called the party at Llewellyn's Pub "a perfect opportunity to celebrate our birthday and the city at the same time."

Randy Vines says that while the shirts poke fun at the city's colloquialisms, they also embrace the city's quirkiness, including the age-old rivalry between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Chicago Cubs. "[The shirts] don't alienate anyone except those that are from outside St. Louis," Randy

says. That said, the shirts are by no means meant to appeal to tourists. Instead, the Vines have received most



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Identical twins Randy (left) and Jeff Vines have produced their second line of T-shirts with cheeky St. Louis slogans. "We design shirts the way we see the city — edgy and cool," says Jeff Vines.

of their business from St. Louis natives who want to show their loyalty to the city. "We're not going for the souvenir stores at Union Station," Jeff says. "We design shirts the way we see the city — edgy and cool."

Randy added, "St. Louis has this reputation of being staid and conservative. But the attitude is there. It just needs to be exploited."

The twins see creating their shirts as their own way of contributing to the renewed passion for St. Louis.

the Motor City, convinced the twins to create their own shirts for St. Louis.

"I would've been the first to buy one of these shirts, but they didn't exist," Jeff says. "So we had to make them ourselves."

The twins say that when they first had the idea for creating the T-shirts, friends and family were supportive of what they thought would be a nice hobby. But when they started receiving e-mails from people across the country asking for the shirts, they realized they had something worth expanding.

"It has grown so much," Randy says. "It's grown far beyond anyone's imagination."

Jeff added that the shirts' popularity amazes him, particularly because of STL-Style's limited production and budget.

"The most rewarding thing is seeing people wearing our shirts and being proud of our city," he says.

The T-shirt venture is still just a part-time job, although the twins say they'd love to make it a full-time job. Along with the small team of designers and webmasters they say they would be lost without, the Vines are currently working on creating more designs for their shirts, as well as putting the finishing touches on their website, www.stl-style.com. Online ordering should be available in July, the Vines say. **W**

"When we started making these shirts, people our age couldn't wait to leave the city," Randy says. "It was like the city was bleeding all of these creative young people. But now ... it's really exciting to have a front-row seat to the city's comeback."

The inspiration for STL-Style came from a store in another downtrodden city — Detroit. That store, which sold shirts that capitalized on the quirks of