

Entrepreneur brings home-based businesses to Alma

By Christeena Sherman

Correspondent

It's been a little over a year since Rebecca Cardennis moved to Alma from Nederland and brought her home-based businesses with her. And not long ago, she decided she had become established enough to reach out and join the South Park Chamber of Commerce. So now the chamber has two new businesses. Shinza Design is Cardennis' graphic arts trade, while Mountain Pals Pet Sitting is her other endeavor.

Cardennis is a Colorado native and has been a "mountain gal" her entire life, though not residing in Park County until about a year ago. She is a rock- and ice-climbing enthusiast and met her companion on one of her climbing group's adventures. She relocated to Alma just before the end of '08.

Cardennis' love for animals and her experience in working with them prompted her to start Mountain Pals Pet Sitting. Plus, she's unable to own as many pets as she'd like. She was a veterinarian technician for 10 years and practiced not only in Colorado, but in California, as well. Because of that experience, she has developed skills in oncology, orthopedic surgery, and emergency room veterinary medicine, and she also takes pride in her geriatric care for dogs.

While working at a Berkeley, Calif., no-kill animal shelter, she fell in love with a golden retriever-mix pup and adopted him when he was three years old. The dog, nicknamed "Mr. Mellow," is now 9 years old, weighs 85 pounds and assists Cardennis in making the pets that she cares for feel comfortable and "at home."

Mr. Mellow is playful with the younger pooches and very sensitive and gentle with the older ones.

The dog-lover has worked in various no-kill operations in Boulder and other mountain communities.

"I treat the dogs that are in my care as if they were my own. I take the bigger dogs for one-to-three-hour hikes in the area while the little guys stay in the car, and it seems to be working out just fine. I always make sure all of the dogs get along before I take them into my care. I also post photos of them on my Web site, which is mountainpals.com," said Cardennis in a telephone interview.

Despite her location in Alma, she uses a 303 telephone number – 303-507-2001 – for both Mountain Pals Pet Sitting and Shinza Design because of her dedicated customers following her after she moved to Alma.

She moved in with Shad Bruno in Alma after meeting him on a rock-climbing expedition, and he also has a Park County business – Agent Drain – a sewer- and drain-cleaning company serving Park and Summit counties that he has been operating about four years. It's at agentdrain.com and 970-406-1814.

Caring pet sitter

Cardennis' pet sitting can extend to emergency situations.

"I take in peoples' dogs that are on vacation, and even have folks that are stranded and can't get to them call me to take care of [their pets]," she said.

Renee Ryan, manager of Chow Down Healthy Pet Supplies in Fairplay has been happy about her referrals of pet owners to Cardennis.

"It seems to me that Rebecca is very caring and genuine about Mountain Pals. Everyone that I've referred to her is very pleased," she said.

Cardennis is extremely happy with the relationship, also. So far, she has been relying on word-of-mouth and well-placed business cards to promote Mountain Pals.

Cardennis notes that putting a dog in a kennel when his/her owners are travelling not only adds stress to the already stressed-out animal, but could also lead to infec-

tious illnesses.

"Neighbors, friends, and family may not have the ability to give medications and/or care for older dogs, and that's where I come in," she said.

"Once, I was in the position to help an Australian shepherd that was disabled and confined to a wheelchair," said Cardennis. The owners didn't want the pup, and Cardennis stepped in to care for the guy to help find him a good home.

Shinza Design

Shinza Design, Cardennis' other home-based business, specializes in graphic arts. She studied at San Francisco State College, earning a degree in informational arts and learned how to design products to promote various companies in Web and logo design, business cards, and virtually all aspects of marketing. She enjoys helping small businesses get a start.

The graphic artist worked for a children's software company in California's Silicon Valley after college, before returning to Colorado.

"Sometimes I re-create different designs that a company has already put into place, because there was previously no consistency in them," Cardennis said. "And, I also help to develop their brand identity."

So far, the move to Alma seems to be working out well for her "I willingly moved to the closely knit community of Alma from Nederland, even though it was a larger town than Alma. I like the small-town atmosphere," she said. "I'm forever an artist, and there's a huge artistic population here."

Now that she's joined the chamber, Cardennis is recommending it for other businesses. "I encourage small businesses to get in touch with the South Park chamber," she said. "That way, whether the organization is new, small, or even if they've been in business for quite some time, the chamber is a great way to get the word out to let people know about their company."