



BIZ BUZZ: Entrepreneur becomes her own boss, opening business after layoff

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A floral shop is opening in Pillager in time for the holidays.

Cedarwood Floral, which is opening on Cedar Avenue in Pillager, is the business venture of entrepreneur Amy Ringler. The planned opening date is Dec. 1. The floral shop expects to offer fresh flowers, plants and silk flowers, seasonal items, gift bags, greeting cards, candles, soap and lotions and other gifts. They will also be selling real Christmas trees.

The target market - Pillager and surrounding areas of Randall, Lincoln, Cushing, Motley and East Gull Lake.

Ringler, who has a bachelor's degree in accounting, worked for a company for 14 years before the business moved south and she was laid off permanently. She looked for work but in this economy found few opportunities when companies told her they didn't want to add staff at this point. So she took the initiative and looked around Pillager where she makes her home with her husband Kevin and 11-year-old son Christopher. Ringler is originally from Brainerd. Her husband grew up in Staples.

She researched what the community didn't have and what service she could provide as a business owner. When she found the answer, she dove in. She counted 14 churches in her target area and considered the number of events at each. She sent out flyers to businesses, churches and schools to announce her new shop.

Ringler worked with Gail Levenson, executive director at Cass County Economic Development Corp., to develop a business plan. Ringler is now working to prepare the 1,230 square feet she leased for the business.

"I think there is potential out there, I really do," Ringler said.

Ringler is hiring a seasoned florist for her business. She said she'll use her expertise for the business side and will be doing everything from answering phones to making deliveries. Being her own boss has been liberating. And Ringler said she's got a network of business associates she can depend on for ideas and experience.

Tam and Erik Paulson recently received calls from customers who were afraid they were closing. But as last week's business story noted for readers, the Paulsons sold the travel agency side of their business to focus on their other enterprise - escorted travel.

Last week, the Dispatch noted **Traveler's Fare Inc.** purchased Paulson's travel agency business. The story made it clear the Paulsons were continuing with their business, PTS Tours, in Brainerd.

PTS Tours continues on Washington Street. Last week's story even listed the 2010 destinations for trips PTS Tours has scheduled. But maybe the reaction of even a few people is a sign of just how skittish people are in this economy.

Lakewood Health System in Staples is recycling billboards into tote bags and reports the proceeds are benefiting Lakewood's Serenity Sanctuary gardens. The vinyl tote bags, called Eco Bags, are sold at The Shoppe, a gift shop at Lakewood's main campus in Staples. The bags were debuted at a green fair in Little Falls.

Lakewood reports the bags are constructed by a local vendor and "hand-made and specifically cut to preserve the colors of the original billboards."

Tastefully Simple independent consultant Shannon Janco is working with **Riverwood Healthcare Center** in Aitkin for a fundraiser for Riverwood's Foundation from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday.

Participants will be able to choose from 60 products and wrapped gift box sets and will be able to sample products. Fifteen percent of sales go to the foundation.

Anderson Brothers Construction Co. of Brainerd announced it is expanding its aggregate sales and offering retail asphalt sales. In a news release, Ron Wickham, vice president of aggregate, said the company has seen the market grow and needs change to begin providing the asphalt mix to small private contractors in the lakes area.

Pequot Lakes Orthodontics, with Dr. Michael McDermott, has expanded to a new location at 4284 Woodman St. by the Pequot Lakes High School. A grand opening is planned from noon to 6 p.m. Wednesday with public tours of the facility.

McDermott, who lives in Baxter, has been working in the lakes area for 10 years. He grew up in Faribault and graduated with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and biology from St. Olaf College in Northfield. He earned his dental degree, graduating with high honors, at the University of Minnesota, before getting a specialty certificate in orthodontics from St. Louis University along with a master's degree in dentistry.

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