

PROGRESS 2008

The Write Design: Nearly 10 years old and still more than you think

In the fall of 1998, Pam Blomgren left the confines of a typical 8-5 workday and opened The Write Design, a home-based desktop publishing business. Her desire was to utilize skills acquired during her life experiences as a copywriter, ad creator, communications director, marketing supervisor, poet, musician and computer lover to help fill a void she recognized while working at the Oskaloosa Chamber.

"Businesses without communication and creative service departments, small or home-based businesses, individuals and families all have a need at one time or another for written work, design work, or just some simple direction with their creative projects," said Blomgren. "While employed at the Chamber, many were coming into my office and asking me to help write news releases or design brochures. I realized I could help meet their needs by

my venturing out on my own."

"So I left the office environment ready to address the creative needs of others in the casual home office environment," stated Blomgren. "My goal was to give myself plenty of flexibility, maintain high quality work products and manage the project process as conveniently as possible for my clients."

The list of services The Write Design has provided since 1998, and continues to provide, expands as inquiries increase. So far, that list includes:

- Brochure, logo, simple Web site and business card design
- News release creation (complete with pictures and interviews)
- Photo scans, restoration and collages
- 8 mm slide scans or digital photos to DVDs or print photos
- Cassette, 45 RPM and 33-1/3 RPM vinyl record burns to CD

• Web site content coordination

• Brochure and/or Web site text

• Baby announcements

• Wedding programs

• Personalized family calendars

• Holiday fliers, letters and cards

• And the list continues to grow.

The Write Design is quick to recommend local printers and other professional services when a large volume is required or requests exceed the scope of The Write Design. "I am cognitive of my limitations," said Blomgren, "but it never hurts to ask."

To ask those project-related questions call the Write Design during her regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.), (641) 673-7533. More information and a project information request form are available on The Write Design's Web site www.thewritedesign.biz.

A-1 Custom Car Audio & Pawn not your stereotypical pawn shop

A-1 Custom Car Audio & Pawn is not your stereotypical pawnshop. The first thing you notice when you walk through the door is a well-lit, very clean, inviting environment. A-1 has been in business at 813 A Ave. W. since 2001. A-1 is owned and operated by Nick Slagter with a little help from the shop-cat, Stripe. The second thing you notice as you enter the store is a large wall, lined with all the latest innovations in automotive electronics. CD players, speakers, automotive headrests with TV screens built in them, subwoofers, custom boxes, marine audio, neon lighting and much more. A lighted working display holds stereos and speakers, so you can see and hear what you are buying. A-1 also stocks a large variety of install kits, fuses and wiring harnesses to complete installation.

Slagter says, "We offer

complete professional installation of all our products in your car, truck, boat or RV. We do everything from speaker replacement, to adding TV screens to your headrests for the kids."

"Many people don't know this, but all of our car audio is brand new and carries a full manufacturer's warrant," he added.

The shop carries popular brand names like Kenwood, Pioneer, MTX and many more. A-1 can also special order many different wheels and tires of all sizes.

A-1 is like two stores in one, the car audio side and the pawnshop side. On the pawnshop side, you can find quality pre-owned merchandise at discounted prices. Some things you may find include electronics, tools, musical instruments, movies, video games, TVs, jewelry, lawnmowers and much more.

Their inventory is always changing.

"The pawnshop is a great way for people who are in a bind to get through these hard times," Slagter said.

He explained that a customer might bring items into the shop as collateral and receive a 30-day cash loan against that item. At the end of the 30 days, when the loan is repaid, the customer can retrieve their item. Customers that borrow money may often have had an unexpected bill come up like car trouble, an overdue light bill, or sick child in need of medicine. These short-term loans really help our customers get through until their next payday, with lower interest than a bank or a payday loan business.

A-1 Custom Car Audio & Pawn's hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Their phone number is (641) 672-0202.

Lesa's country setting adds to company's uniqueness

Nestled on a hill overlooking the city of Oskaloosa, in a quiet country setting, lies Lesa's Country Crafts. Eight years of work by Jim and Lesa Van Der Linden has kept this innovative and growing business alive on the Mahaska County business front.

The business has grown from doing crafts for 15 years and their love for sharing their talents with others. After participating in craft shows for many years, the Van Der Lindens needed a more permanent home.

Lesla's Country Crafts, in its eighth year of operation is located in the shadow of a mile east of KBOE at 2191 230th Street. The shop offers a variety of merchandise ranging from bird houses, benches and outhouses to floral arrangements, collectibles and soy candles.

Jim has a knack for creation and has added wood routed signs to a store repertoire that includes wooden craft items. Special order items are not an unusual request.

Under the Oak soy candles continue to be a popular item. In a variety of

scents and fragrances, they are all white candles. They are available in three different sizes and votives. The Iowa-made candles burn cleaner than regular candles.

Primitives by Kathy, items with a rustic touch, have been added to the inventory. Custom design t-shirts for all sizes has also been added.

Lesla's Country Crafts does special orders including shelves, benches, tables, chairs or any about idea a customer may wish to enjoy. A variety of woods and stains are available to make that "one of a kind" gift item or a personal item for your home. Jim also refinishes furniture pieces.

Lesla's Country Craft will host a Spring Open House in late April or May to highlight spring and summer merchandise. Look for an announcement in the coming weeks. The Van Der Lindens also are planning a summer outdoor sale.

Every fall, look for their "Fall Open House" where you can find a variety of fall and Christmas items or just shop and look around the store while listening to special music

and sip on their famous "Country Apple Cider."

Look for Lesa's Country Crafts in Mount Pleasant for the 59th annual Midwest Old Threshers Reunion. This "working" craft show, features demonstrations of some of their woodcraft items Adirondack chairs, outhouses and other items.

Reasonable pricing makes Lesa's Country Crafts a great place to shop. They also offer the convenience of shopping online at www.lesascountrycrafts.com. Customers can purchase with a credit card and have the purchase shipped directly to where it needs to go. Store hours are 12-6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; closed Sundays and Mondays. Lesa's Country Crafts is also open by appointment. Appointments may be made at 641-673-8064.

If you are looking for a special unique gift or just something for your home or garden, come to Lesa's Country Crafts. Jim and Lesa will be there to greet you. The Van Der Lindens do special orders. If you don't see what you are wanting at the store, just ask.

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