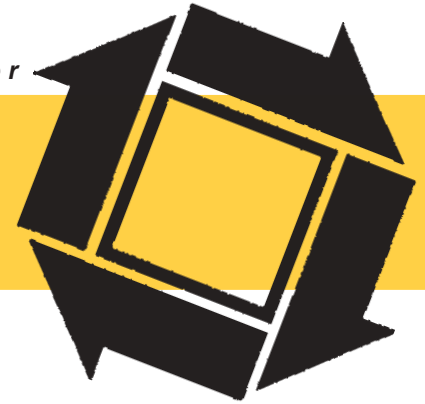


SMALL BUSINESS REVIEW



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SUCCESS STORY

It's All About Location for The Health Shelf

Eliane Niemann says having a successful small business is all about the location and she should know. She's been in over four locations since opening The Health Shelf, and has been able to retain and gain new customers.

In 1994, Niemann was facing serious health problems. She was taking three medications and her doctors wanted to prescribe more. She had heard about how a herb specialist had helped a woman who had been sent home to die. The woman, who had been so seriously ill, was now the "picture of health," Niemann recalls. The woman told her about a herb specialist in North Carolina who had helped restore her health using herbal remedies. This was the beginning of a turning point in Niemann's life.

"Long story short, I went to him [and] after nine months, my asthma was gone. After two weeks my chest pain was gone. At that point, I decided I wanted



Eliane Niemann with some of her favorite herbal products.

to help other people like he had helped me," she explains.

In April 1995, Niemann started her new venture to help others. She began inside a shared, 12x12-foot booth in Happy's Flea Market with five small wire racks of herbs that she had tried and trusted.

Over time, people began to come to her for help with different ailments and issues. These new customers allowed her to research and expand not only her line of products, but also

her business location and space. Her next move was to Crossroads Mall on weekdays, while continuing her business in the flea market on the weekends. She tried out several other locations for her weekday sales. However, she returned to running her store out of the mall along with keeping her weekend business at the flea market. At this point, Niemann was running her store in two places, seven days a week, by herself. She needed a change.

Her change came when she spoke with a leasing agent and learned about the Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center. Niemann elaborates, "First [the agent] asked me if I had a business plan and I had no idea what a business plan was. At that time, I was looking to move out of Crossroads and she suggested that I go see Mr. Baldwin."

Roy Baldwin, director of the

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Niemann

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RRSBDC, met with Niemann and helped her put together a business plan and to get her “ducks in a row.” He helped her to see she needed to give up one of the two locations because she was only one person. “Trying to work seven days a week really was not practical,” recalls Niemann.

In January 2006, Niemann combined her inventory and moved The Health Shelf to one

location at the Brookside Shopping Center on Williamson Road. She now offers over 600 different herbal combinations, metabolism testing, ionic foot baths, colon cleansing, and she has an acupuncture massage bed. Niemann says her store has been very successful in her new location. With the help of the RRSBDC, Niemann realized that one full-time location is as cost-effective and profitable than two part-time spaces.

The Health Shelf is located at

6423 Williamson Road and open Monday through Saturday. For store hours or more information call (540) 366-2222, email go-herbs@juno.com, or visit www.mynsp.com/waxhippo.

For more information on the services of the Roanoke Regional SBDC and how it can help you start or grow your small business, call (540) 983-0717, email sbdc@roanokechamber.org or visit the web site at www.rrsbdc.org



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