

Boot camp exceeds expectations

Editor's note: This is the first of six features on downtown businesses that attended a recent boot camp.

BY KARLA POMEROY
Boomerang Staff Writer

Local business owners who recently attended a business boot camp have been busy implementing changes that they hope benefit their customers.

Copper Kettle owner Cyndi Martin said she was initially hesitant about participating in the "Six Plus One" business boot camp by Jon Schallert mainly because of the cost, with the owners having to pay the cost of the workshop that was held for the first time in Longmont, Colo. She said she knew as a new business owner she could use some help. She looked at Schallert's Web site for more information and decided to go, she said, to get information on how to make her Web site more efficient.

The Copper Kettle, a gourmet kitchen store, opened in July of 2005. It features a variety of kitchen items for the child wanting to make cookies or the more experienced cook. It also features a tea house and espresso bar upstairs. Martin also offers cooking classes through the store. The store is open seven days a week.

Boot camp

Schallert describes his boot camp as a camp for "business owners who want to accelerate their learning curve, receive in-depth instruction, strategies and specific tactics on how to become a dominant destination business, which can pull consumers past your competition."

Within the first 15 minutes of the boot camp, Martin said, she knew that Schallert could charge a lot more because of the wealth of information he was providing. She said the information provided in the first few minutes far exceeded her expectations.

When she came back to Laramie, the first change she made was in how she compiled and sent her monthly newsletter. She said the changes have been positive for both her customers and her employees. She also came back and put up lights directly above her window with her business sign because she said she wanted to light up the window more.

She is currently working on changes to her Web site, she



ROB DENSMORE/Boomerang photographer

Cooper Kettle owner Cyndi Martin shows off one of her displays at her shop which features a gourmet kitchen store, tea house and espresso bar on Second Street.

said.

"Our main focus has been cleaning up a few areas, the Internet, the newsletter and better employee training.

Martin said she has made some other changes within the store and said there are a few more things she wants to complete before Schallert comes for his visit Wednesday. The on site visit is part of the "Six Plus One" program that Laramie businesses participated in for the boot camp.

"I want him to look at my store and tell me where it's weak," Martin said. She said knowing Schallert's personality, he will tell her what's weak and will tell her what her store's strengths are as well. She said her main concern is the weaknesses in the store so she can improve her business and serve her customers better, she said.

One of her strengths, she said, is her displays, noting her employees do a good job of putting together displays, including a dominant display and dominant aisle in the store.

Martin said the information from Schallert didn't stop with the boot camp. The business owners meet with Main Street Program Director Jane Daniels (who facilitated getting Laramie businesses to go to the camp) in a teleconference call with Schallert. Martin said Schallert has also

The Copper Kettle

209 S. Second

www.mycopperkettle.com

Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

been available for e-mail or telephone questions. The teleconference meetings will continue for a year.

She said she appreciates Schallert's encouragement for small businesses. She said he tells businesses not to look at big box stores or big department stores as threats, but as a way to push their business farther.

"We can offer more than Wal-Mart," she said.

Martin said she has always enjoyed coming to work since opening her business in July 2005. She said now she is even more excited to come to work and see what she can work on next.

The boot camp, she said, also provided a great network with business owners from across the country. She said she visits with owners in Florida, Colorado and Los Angeles.

Locally, Martin said, the boot camp provided her an opportunity to get to know the other downtown business owners that attended. She has learned more about them and their vision for their stores.

Martin said she is excited about the downtown as well, noting it has a lot to offer.

"The downtown is thriving," she said. "Yes, there are some empty spaces," she added, but said there are fewer empty spaces now than 18 months ago.

Six Laramie downtown business owners attended the business boot camp last month. The businesses that participated were The Copper Kettle, Coal Creek Roastery, In Sheep's Clothing, Big Hoss Mountain Sports, Medicine Bow Natural Foods and Deli and the Brown and Gold Outlet.

The cost of the camp includes an on-site visit by Schallert to the six businesses and monthly teleconference meetings with the business owners. Schallert will be coming to Laramie on Wednesday for the on site visits and will also provide a 90-minute condensed version of his 2 1/2 day workshop for the public Wednesday night. Contact Main Street Program Director Jane Daniels for more information or to register for the workshop at 742-2212. Daniels said anyone with a current small business or thinking of starting up a business is encouraged to attend.