

BUSINESS BUSINESS

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PROGRESS 2009 Lessons from area businesses continuing to thrive during challenging times



Environmentally friendly, socially conscious car wash opens

▶ **4**
pg.

Uncertain economy: When in doubt, go back to the basics

▶ **7**
pg.

Business plan behind the Story Mansion

▶ **16**
pg.

The Doctor Is In

Montana Integrative Medicine hits its stride by helping people get — and stay — well

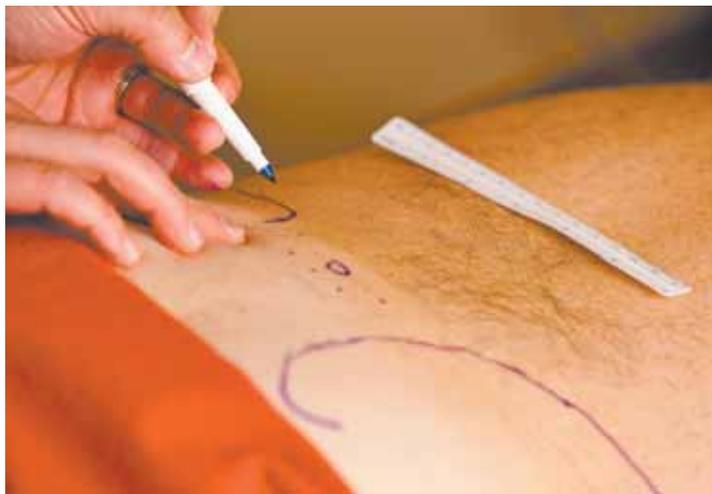


BY NICOLE ROSENLEAF RITTER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS LEE

WHEN THE PUBLIC VOTED DR. JOHN NEUSTADT Best Doctor among all physicians in the greater Bozeman area in the annual Best of Bozeman survey in 2008, it caused a bit of a stir. That's because Neustadt is a naturopathic doctor, and all the previous award winners had always been traditional medical doctors.

For Neustadt — whose Montana Integrative Medicine (MIM) clinic was founded less than five years ago — it was a strong vote of confidence for his practice, which he says is focused on “identifying and treating the underlying causes of disease to promote people’s health and get them back to being

Neustadt demonstrates the preparations for prolotherapy, an injection technique to relieve pain.



healthy and vital.”

Naturopathic physicians attend four-year, graduate-level naturopathic medical schools and receive the same basic sciences training as a medical doctor but also study alternative approaches to therapy, emphasizing prevention and wellness.

In addition to his Best Doctor honors, Neustadt takes his word-of-mouth growth as another positive sign. He notes that most of the clinic’s growth comes not from his blog on the high-traffic, national Huffington Post website or from his publications — and there are many, from books and journals to conference presentations — but from people talking about their experiences with others.

“My clinic is growing because people get help and then they tell other people about it,” he says.

There is also another aspect of Neustadt’s practice that makes him unusual among medical practitioners in the area: He doesn’t take health

insurance.

“In a way, this is a pure model of healthcare, because people are choosing to come here and pay out of pocket,” Neustadt explains. “I can code and invoice for insurance, but there is no guarantee of reimbursement, so if people don’t get help, then my practice doesn’t grow.”

He says that he eschews insurance because he doesn’t want volume of patients to determine the success of his practice and because he says that insurance bureaucracy comes between doctors and patients.

“What I do now is based 100 percent on the quality of care,” Neustadt explains. “It’s not a volume game. So many doctors are forced to care not about whether someone is getting better but about how many people they can see in one day.”

One of MIM’s most popular services is prolotherapy, an injection technique for the treatment of musculoskeletal pain. Neustadt notes that he has been seeing clients traveling in to the clinic from neighboring states to have the treatments, which can relieve chronic pain. “I think people are tired of going to conventional doctors and getting a 10-minute appointment and a recommendation for a painkiller or surgery,” he says of patients with pain issues. *continued on page 17*

John Neustadt, of Montana Integrative Medicine, is a naturopathic doctor.

The Doctor Is In continued from page 12

Since he is a licensed naturopathic physician, Neustadt can offer prescription drugs and other conventional therapies and tests, but he says that many people benefit more from solutions that are more holistic in nature.

“One of the things I hear repeatedly is that people like that I’m not just conventional and I’m not just alternative,” Neustadt explains. “I really straddle the fence. I like to look at the body holistically and teach people how they can take better care of themselves.”



Neustadt developed a line of “nutraceuticals” with his business partner, Steve Pieczenki, a medical doctor.

Erlenbush continued from page 15

carry in the store. Aaron also noted an increase in the small engine repair portion of the business since people are now more willing to fix a piece of equipment versus upgrade to a new and improved model. As a smaller company (they employ 4-7 employees, which includes the owners), one key to their success has been the ability to work directly with their clients and to make certain that their employees are well-trained and reflect the same straight talk attitude that the owners do. The company seems well positioned to be able to judge the local market and remain flexible enough to make further adjustments as needed to stay vibrant.

The list of businesses in our area of the state that work tirelessly to create their own personal success stories goes on and on. The entrepreneurial pioneering spirit of Montana is alive and well.

Robyn Erlenbush is a downtown business owner and the Broker/Owner of ERA Landmark Real Estate (with offices in Bozeman, Big Sky, Livingston and Clyde Park), NAI Landmark Commercial, and Intermountain Property Management. She can be reached at robyn@eralandmark.com.

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