

Beading Circle

Uptown shop sells beads of all sizes for all tastes

By Lorie Hutson of the Montana Standard 1997

Like a garden filled with the most delicate and intricate flowers, the Garden of Beadin', 200 W. Park St., is a beader's paradise. Brilliant baubles from the Czech Republic, India, Africa and many other places line the shelves of Heidi Kinzer's new shop. The store opened at the beginning of October.

But 17-year-old Kinzer isn't your average small-business proprietor. She splits her time between the store and business classes at Montana Tech.

"I guess I always wanted to have a bead store and I thought, 'What am I waiting for? I should just do it now,'" she says. Kinzer started beading about four years ago.

"Actually one of the main reasons I did it is because I thought it would be better than any college class," she says. "You'll never forget your mistakes."

Kinzer, who is a Whitehall native, says she considered going to the Art Institute in Seattle to study before committing to opening the bead store- and says she is keeping that option open for the next couple years.

The Christmas shopping season was good to her store, she says. More and more craftspeople are discovering the shop.

Fly fishermen have stopped in to find beads for fly tying, as have quilters looking for trinkets to embellish their work, and even people who want to decorate their body piercing.

She says beading is starting to gain popularity. "I don't think beading ever really went out of style. But I think people are finding out they can go out and make their own jewelry for a lot less than they can buy it," she says.

One of the most popular beads in her store right now is the cloisonné beads. They are designed with metal on the bead surface and bright colors are enameled between the metal.

Kinzer sells earrings, necklaces and rings she designs, along with other jewelry. She is hoping to turn the back room into a "Made in Montana" section. Kinzer's mother is selling some handmade sling bags and other fabric work there now.

In January, Kinzer plans to start holding beading classes. A beginner's class will cover the basics of beading things like earrings and necklaces, she says. Advanced classes will focus on more intricate designs.

Kinzer talks about her store with the faith of a young woman ready to endure the surprises a small business can bring. "I just look on the bright side of everything that happens," she says. "Everything will work out eventually."