

Uptown Bead Business is Booming

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Garden of Beadin' at 43 W. Park, Uptown, is unquestionably Butte's most exotic shop. Glittering glass display shelves hold hundreds of thousands of beads, in every imaginable shade of color. Owner Heidi Bowen says the shop is the largest beading store in Montana.

In addition to beads, Garden of Beadin' has star lanterns, candles, clothing, incense and other imports. Heidi recently expanded the clothing and gift lines. "We added clothes about six months ago and it's really taken off." Overall, Heidi reports, business is great.

Heidi started the Garden of Beadin' at the corner of Montana and Park in October 1997, and moved across Montana Street in December the same year. In 1999, she moved into the Park Street store, known to old-timers as the P.O. News Stand.

The statistics indicate the business's growth. Her first location was 500 square feet; the second, 1200 square feet, and the current shop has 2400 square feet.

That's pretty impressive but, when Heidi's age is added into the equation, it borders on mind-boggling. Heidi is 21. She established the Garden of Beadin' when she was 17.

"I started beading as a youngster" she says, and got her start in business selling at craft shows. "I really enjoy beading so it's nice to be doing something I like"

Heidi teaches two classes on a regular basis- beginning beading and wire working. "We have other classes we offer once in awhile"

Heidi, who grew up in Whitehall, took a year off- leaving her parents, Connie and Ken Kinzer, in charge of the shop- to study fashion marketing at the Art Institute of Seattle where, she says, she learned a lot about display, design, and advertising.

In addition to upgrading her knowledge, the Seattle trip changed her life. Heidi met Matthew Bowen, in Seattle and now they are parents of a son, Sean, born in June.

Balancing work and motherhood is "good, once you get over the sleep deprivation," Heidi says with a laugh.

Charlie VanLoan designed the store's Web site, www.beadin.com, and now "we're starting to get some Internet business," Heidi says. The Shop also has a link on butteamerica.com.

She returns to Seattle to attend the gift show. "Just going to Seattle kind of opens your eyes," she says, speaking as a woman born and reared in Montana. "There's not quite the shopping and selection here. Every time I go there, I get ideas for my store, from merchandising to layout and design."

Heidi's inventory includes items made by Butte artisans such as copper chandeliers by Don Watts, amulet bags by Darlene Alexander, who spends her summers here, and ties dye by John Tesdal.

In fact, when his mother was interviewed, baby Sean looked pretty groovy in a tie dye shirt and pants set.