

## SMALL BUSINESS

# SPOTLIGHTS

Small businesses and professional practices are the backbone of our community. Unlike big chains, they contribute to the character of our town, helping to make Bloomington the special place it is. Small businesses create good jobs and keep money circulating here rather than having it leave town for corporate headquarters in New York City, Atlanta, or elsewhere. And with small businesses, you know the owner, and he or she can get to know you. In this special advertorial section, we feature the stories of local businesses with fewer than two dozen employees. Each business is unique and making a contribution to the common good.



(l-r) Mark Schmidt and Greg Fox, owners of Nashville Spice Co.  
Photo by Martin Boling

## Nashville Spice Company Greg Fox and Mark Schmidt, owners

When Greg Fox and Mark Schmidt moved to Nashville, Indiana, a few years ago, they knew they would open a shop there someday—they just weren't expecting to do it this year. But when prime space opened at 58 E. Main St., they launched Nashville Spice Company in nine weeks.

The shop combines Fox and Schmidt's appreciation of food culture with their exposure to worldwide cuisines. "We're embracing the cultural diversity of the world through spices," Fox says. "The world is a lot smaller than people think it is, and we want to broaden their perspective." Because of their spice knowledge, they also created and sell their own Nashville Spice Company-branded products.

To keep products fresh, their 250 spices and blends are from small vendors and are stocked in small quantities. All are free of additives, GMOs, fillers, and gluten. They also sell rubs, sauces, and marinades. Having cooked with 95 percent of the blends they offer, Schmidt says, "We can speak firsthand about what to do with the spices and how to work with them." About using spices, Schmidt adds, "A large percentage of people are afraid of spices, so we believe education is as important as quality of product. If you let them experience it, people's perceptions open." For more information, visit [nashvillespicecompany.com](http://nashvillespicecompany.com).



Kathy Pafford, owner of  
Skin Aesthetics Medical Spa.  
Photo by Jeff Richardson

## Skin Aesthetics Medical Spa

Kathy Pafford, owner

Kathy Pafford, a licensed medical aesthetician and owner of Skin Aesthetics Medical Spa, believes being a small business owner lets her provide individual services that match her patients' desires. "I pride myself in trying to listen to what a patient wants and finding a conservative solution—financially and procedurally," Pafford says.

After working in Bloomington for 10 years, Pafford moved her office from Howe Street to 2801 N. Walnut, Suite 8, in August to facilitate the growth of her practice. "This is what I've done for the last 20 years, and I want to perfect my craft and take care of my patients," she says. "Ultimately, it's your face and you have to be pleased with what you get. The patient's care is first and foremost."

Licensed as an advanced injector, Pafford does Botox, Dysport, and dermal-filler injections; laser hair and vein removal; microdermabrasion treatments; and chemical peels. She also carries a line of skin care products. "It's nice to help everyone, regardless of what decade they are in, slow down the aging process and get comfortable with where they are," she adds. "We can tweak as we go and soften, so it's not so hard for a person to deal with the aging process, which is tough." For more information, visit [skin-aesthetics.net](http://skin-aesthetics.net).

## Omosaico

Chris Elam, owner

Chris Elam's entry into the world of mosaics was through tile-setting, but his life changed while attending a green-building convention where he met an artist who specialized in mosaic art. "Something about seeing her work opened up a new realm for me," says Elam, owner of Omosaico. This led him to attend the Chicago Mosaic School, the only school in the country that approaches mosaic from its Greek and Roman roots.

That was 10 years ago. Elam now creates all styles of mosaics, but "contemporary mosaic is a realm not many people are familiar with," he says. "Many art collectors and galleries have never seen mosaics created using the ancient methods—cutting stone and glass with hand tools and embedding the pieces in mortar. While mosaic is an ancient art form, there are no universities that teach mosaic in the U.S."

Elam wants to offer builders, architects, and designers an extra tool in their toolboxes and hopes to market his work to art collectors and galleries. "I'm really excited about making the connection between mosaic and architecture," he says, explaining that he enjoys trying to realize the creative vision of others and seeing the results. "While I love creating my own work, commissions offer a unique opportunity to explore," he adds. For more information, visit [omosaico.com](http://omosaico.com).



Christopher Elam, owner of Omosaico.  
Photo by Martin Boling



Elizabeth Stelle, Jill's House preschool  
director. Photo by Martin Boling

## Jill's House Memory Care

Heather Kinderthain, community  
relations coordinator; Elizabeth  
Stelle, preschool director

As a small business, Jill's House Memory Care, located at 751 E. Tamarack Trail, is able to create flexible options that support people as they age. "When you're small, you can say 'yes' more often," says Community Relations Coordinator Heather Kinderthain. "We get to do what's right for the people living here." In its intimate environment, the Jill's House staff works as a team to create activities designed specifically for the people who live at Jill's House and their family members.

That freedom inspired the staff to fulfill a dream of starting the new Jill's House Intergenerational Preschool with a play- and project-based curriculum. "The benefits to both young and old are priceless," says Preschool Director Elizabeth Stelle. Children ages 3 to 5 spend between 30 and 45 minutes each day actively engaged in meaningful activities with the residents. "We feel that our future has so much to learn from our past," Stelle says. "And our past can find comfort in watching our future grow and flourish."

Stelle says children will help renew creativity, awe, and wonder at Jill's House, plus having a house full of children adds youthful excitement to the residence. "We strive to bring generations together to foster tolerance, acceptance, empathy, and a love for learning," she says. For more information, visit [jillshousememorycare.com](http://jillshousememorycare.com).



Safe Space Life Coaching owner  
Nancy Kalina. Photo by Kip May

## Safe Space Life Coaching

Nancy Kalina, owner

In November 2006, Nancy Kalina received a call from the Willoughby, Ohio, police department alerting her that her father was missing. Less than 24 hours later, Kalina learned they had found his body. “My father was murdered,” says Kalina. “It was a turning point in my life.”

That dramatic loss and the events that followed influenced the direction of Kalina’s own life. A high school work-study coordinator at the time, Kalina forged on, neglecting to take personal time from her career to mourn her father’s passing. Slowly, Kalina’s life began to crumble, and, by the fall of 2009, she began experiencing symptoms of a nervous breakdown. “I had extreme anxiety the likes of which I’d never known,” Kalina says. “I am sure that my breakdown happened because I didn’t allow myself time to grieve.”

After finishing out the school year, Kalina finally gave herself a gift: time to reflect and to mourn the loss of her father. Working through her grief, Kalina came to understand that her life had taken a new direction. She decided to pursue a career as a Martha Beck Certified Life Coach, which allows her to use her experiences to help others. “The murder was a wake-up call that life is too short,” says Kalina. “You never know what might happen.”

## The Toy Chest

Hilary Key, owner

Nestled among the corporate stores in College Mall is a locally owned shop where play is a priority. In every section of The Toy Chest, children can interact with toys and games, and there’s never pressure to buy anything. “We’re not just about making sales, we really believe in the power of play,” says owner Hilary Key. “Kids can play, and once they’ve played with the same toy 20 times, parents can feel confident in a purchase.”

Key believes play has been taken out of childhood. “We really disagree with that,” she says. “We offer a welcoming space for kids and families to come and play.” The shop has demonstration models of games on display, and a fully trained staff to provide assistance. “We can teach you a game so you’re never just blindly guessing whether or not you’re going to like it,” Key adds.

With prices normally within a dollar of franchise and online stores, service is what sets The Toy Chest apart. “That dollar keeps the small business experience alive,” Key says. “It keeps a play space for children, provides quality service, keeps local residents employed above minimum wage, and can be fully recouped if a customer takes advantage of our free gift wrapping. We also offer a loyalty program.”

Learn more at [bloomingtontoychest.com](http://bloomingtontoychest.com).



Manager Emily Stone, Danny Key, and Hilary Key.  
Photo by Stephen Sproull



Dale Steffey.  
Photo by Martin Boling

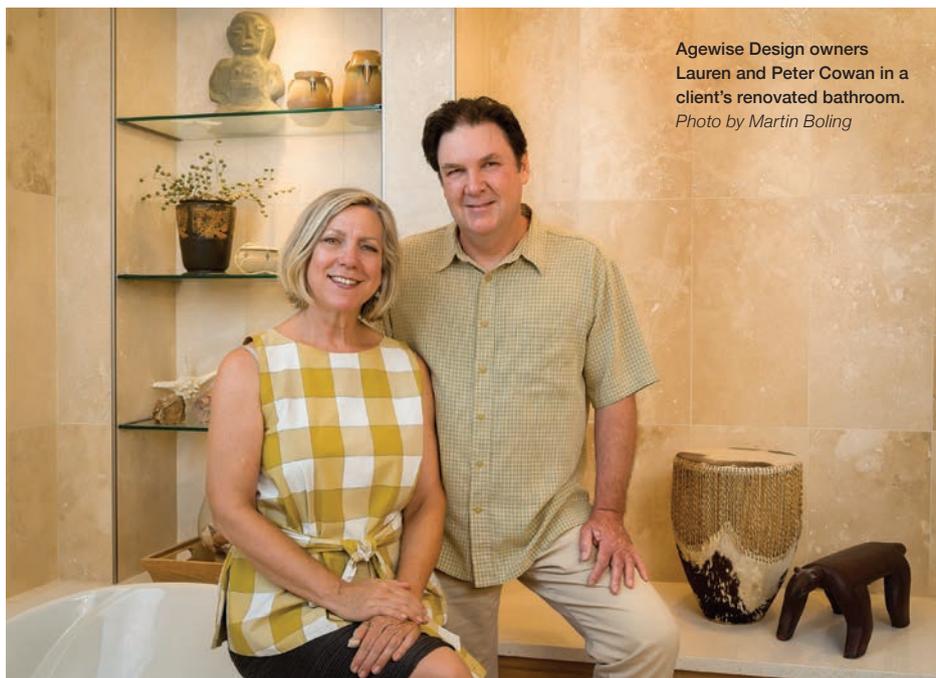
## Dale Steffey Books

Dale Steffey, owner

Eleven years ago, Dale Steffey happened upon a John Dunning protagonist who was both a detective and a book dealer. The Dunning novel opened Steffey’s eyes to the world of book dealing, a pastime Steffey imagined himself pursuing after retirement. As an artist, however, Steffey’s career was impacted more than most by the 2008 downturn in the economy. As a result, his life as a book dealer began sooner than anticipated. His business, Dale Steffey Books, is listed on several websites. “I loved what I was doing while I was an artist, and I love what I am doing now,” the 65-year-old Steffey says. “It doesn’t feel anything like work.”

Steffey’s collection surpasses any one category or genre, and the former artist notes that some favorites include books from authors like James Joyce and T.E. Lawrence, letters written by Saul Bellow, and prints by Matisse. “I don’t just buy and sell books,” he says. “I also deal in ephemera, or printed memorabilia not meant to last a long time.”

Steffey often purchases books from individual collectors and estates. “Bloomington has always been a good book town, and there are a lot of great books to be had here,” says Steffey, who says he’s always looking for pieces to purchase.



Agewise Design owners  
Lauren and Peter Cowan in a  
client's renovated bathroom.  
*Photo by Martin Boling*

## Agewise Design

### Lauren and Peter Cowan, owners

As more older Americans resolve to age in their homes rather than move into continuing care communities, the demand to modify or remodel their homes tastefully so they can age in place safely and comfortably is growing. People looking to do that have three choices: They can buy assistive devices from a home medical supply company and hire someone to install them; they can look for a general contractor with some relevant experience or training; or they can hire a company like Agewise Design that, with its broad knowledge of current products and techniques, specializes in matching their client's tastes with their therapeutic needs.

It all begins with Agewise Design's client-focused approach during the initial, complimentary consultation, explains its owners, Lauren and Peter Cowan. "We start by sitting down, getting to know them, their desires, and challenges, before touring their home," Peter says. "We're always looking for new products that meet current needs but can also be adapted to future needs," adds Lauren. "I love products that are flexible, because our client's needs often change." The Cowans, drawing on their experience, training, and abilities, have designed and remodeled bathrooms, bedrooms, entries, kitchens, and more.

Prior to moving to Bloomington, Lauren was a commercial interior designer in the

San Francisco Bay Area. In Bloomington, she switched to doing residential design, and was inspired by two clients who wanted to age in place. "I saw a place where I could make a difference," Lauren says. To learn first-hand about the effects of aging on functioning, Lauren earned a certificate of Gerontology from IUPUI and trained as a Certified Nursing Assistant through Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington. Agewise Design started when Peter left his job at Indiana University and joined her, bringing his experience in construction and remodeling. He qualified as a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist after completing the training in 2012.

Over their six years in business, the Cowans have identified other needs and expanded the services Agewise Design offers. While aging in place is achievable and desirable, often there comes a time when moving into a more social, supportive environment is a better option. "We're able to set up living spaces for clients, but we realize people can still be socially isolated," Lauren says. People choosing to move into continuing care communities also hire Agewise Design for its move-management services. Lauren generates an interior design that recreates a home on a smaller scale, and they manage downsizing, packing, hiring movers, and settling in.

To learn more, visit [agewisedesign.com](http://agewisedesign.com) or call 812-369-1446.

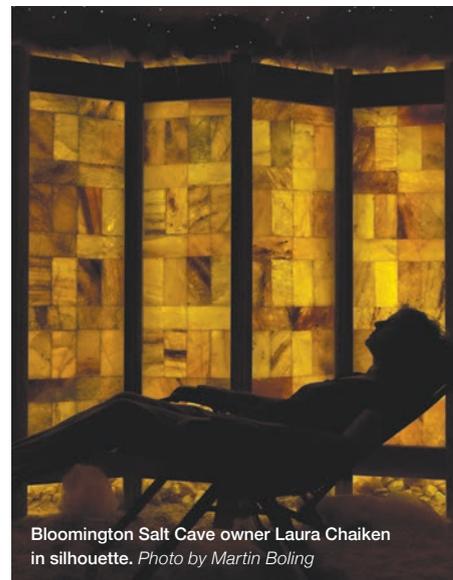
## Bloomington Salt Cave

### Laura Chaiken, owner

When Laura Chaiken and Chris Martin started visiting salt caves, the results were so beneficial they wanted to share it with the community they hold dear. "We love it and we hope other people love it, too," says Chaiken, owner of Bloomington Salt Cave, 115 N. Madison St. "We want to serve our community in helping people have the sense of well-being we feel after a halotherapy session."

Chaiken explains that she and Martin teamed up and put their dreams and skills together to create this unique, dry, salt air environment. A generator crushes pure sodium chloride into micron-sized particles that are breathed deep into the respiratory system, working as a "bronchial tooth-brush" for the airways. "We live in a high pollen-count area," Chaiken says. "Many people suffer from asthma, allergies, and sinus congestion."

Chaiken and Martin think the community will embrace their small business once they experience it. To encourage that, they offered free sessions for six days when they opened. They also have a buy-four-get-five special and will rent out the entire cave. Making sessions affordable is important. "It's a chance to unwind and relax in an environment that encourages that," Martin says. "This is something we see helping people and making their lives a little better." Schedule an appointment at [bloomington-saltcave.com](http://bloomington-saltcave.com).



Bloomington Salt Cave owner Laura Chaiken  
in silhouette. *Photo by Martin Boling*