

The Bent Pin



Owner: Andrena Steinley
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(Web site in progress)
Opened: September 2005

A quilt is a very personal art form—it's an expression of oneself, given with love, saved and cherished, wrapped around loved ones, creating warmth. A quilt paints a picture. It says, "You are family; you are a friend." You sense that same loving atmosphere when you walk into The Bent Pin, a Quilter's Supply store on Main Street in Williston.

Andrena Steinley has not only built a business in her hometown, she's created a place where people can come together to do something they love, or to learn to do it—learn to love it.

Andrena, who loves fabric, worked at Sylvia's Quilt and Sew for only eight months when she learned the shop would be for sale. "I loved the people who would come into the shop and got really attached to the customers and really attached to the staff here, so I decided to go talk to Keith Olson at the SBDC office & it kinda snowballed from there!"

Steinley had been a stay-at-home mom for 13 years and didn't think the bank would

take her seriously, but, with Keith's help and the Small Business Development Center, she got a loan from American State Bank in Williston. She did some remodeling, and transformed the business into a new shop.

Because Andrena didn't have a lot of experience, the staff suggested she take a beginning quilting class. Though she caught on quickly, she spends most of her time doing fabric selection, ordering, receiving, invoicing and payroll.

Andrena opened The Bent Pin on September 1, 2005, and currently employs four part time helpers. They say it's such a friendly place, they even stop by to visit on their days off! Karlene Hallgren notes, "It's great to work here because Andrena is so family-oriented. If we have a problem or need to tend to family, we can do that." Deb Hegney adds, "I'm sure it means a lot to quilters to have a store with a good supply of fabric. We've had people come from many towns in Montana and North Dakota who have said we have a good supply of fabric, even better than in some larger cities."

In her first two years of business, Steinley has offered quilting classes, donated items to schools and quilting guilds, participated in a "shop hop" with other area quilt shops, and has provided work experiences and activities for special needs students in the community. Her plans for the future include creating a Web site so customers can order online, and learning not to spread herself too thin.

Though her young daughter comes to work with her all day and the three boys come in after school, it's tough to balance being a full-time shopkeeper with being a busy wife and mother. Andrena says, "They come in and they are amazed at all the fabric and different things that come in. They think it's kinda cool that mom owns a shop!"

So, next time you are in Williston, stop by The Bent Pin quilt shop, where Andrena says the employees are "a little twisted!"

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