

Midlands Business Journal

Founded 1975

Business Annual/Preview
— inside

JANUARY 15, 2010

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER OF GREATER OMAHA, LINCOLN AND COUNCIL BLUFFS

\$2.00

VOL. 36 NO. 3

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE:

Business owners look to recovery after West Omaha fire

by Michelle Leach

Eight days ago Amy Friedman dropped by the Bagel Bin as she does at least twice a week. That Thursday she narrowly missed getting her half-dozen bagels, as she squeezed in right before closing time at 5 p.m. Friedman would be the parve bakery's last official customer — not just of the day, but for the foreseeable future.

Roughly five hours later, the Bagel Bin as it had been for the past 32 years would be no more, succumbing to a fire on one of the coldest nights of a frigid season.

"I wish I had bought a whole lot more bagels, because I'm pretty addicted to the Bagel Bin," said Friedman, who is spokeswoman for the Millard Public Schools. "It's our home away from home."

"It's like 'Cheers' — a place where everybody knows your name."

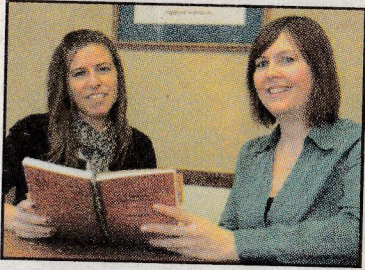
A lot of people share Friedman's sentiments, and if Susan Brezack and her family didn't know that before the fire, they

Continued on page 30.



Bagel Bin owners, from left, Dave, Sue and Scott Brezack ... An ice-covered shell of a building is all that remains, after fire totals an iconic Omaha shop, neighboring businesses.

(Photo by MBL/Jan. 15, 2010)



Care Consultants expands into Iowa with addition of Des Moines branch. — Page 2



Engineering Design Consultants growing, sees additional opportunities. — Page 4



Business owners look to recovery after West Omaha fire

Continued from page 1.
do now.

Brezack, who opened the Bagel Bin near 119th and Pacific streets with her late husband Joel Brezack in 1977, said earlier this week that hundreds of well-wishers had posted comments on a “Rebuild the Bagel Bin” page launched on Facebook shortly after the fire.

“I started reading the comments and there were people on there from as far away as Sweden and California,” Brezack recalled. “I laughed, I cried.”

Brezack said a baker was working inside when the fire broke out. It took roughly 10 minutes, she said, for the bay the Bagel

free-standing safe were stolen during a robbery.

Up until last week’s fire, Brezack indicated, the robbery had been the only similar adversity experienced by the company — the only parve bakery of its kind in Omaha.

“When we sat there, watching it burn, my younger son cried, ‘Our dream is gone,’” Brezack said. “It’s not really.

“What do you do? Do you take up another profession if this is what you’ve always done? You learn and you make it better.”

There was some talk after the fire of relocating the iconic New York-style bak-



Andrea “Andy” Hoig, owner of Metro Magazine, in the publication’s office, which was deemed a total loss because of smoke and water damage.

Killmer had the presence of mind and was in a position to grab the data.

The Bagel Bin isn’t the only business that is looking to rebuild.

“We like where we are, we like our neighbors,” said Al Meyers, co-owner of Invisible Fence of the Heartland. “Ideally, we’ll just take a temporary residence somewhere else.”

Meyers said the business, which specializes in electronic pet containment systems, is currently being run out of a home. Meyers is also hopeful all the company’s data, including customer information, will be retrievable.

Invisible Fence partners with a Colorado-based data recovery firm.

“That is the one thing we hope for, everything else is replaceable — machines



The Jan. 7 fire rages on, spreading to several bays.

Bin occupies in the West Omaha strip mall to fill with smoke. The employee escaped, unharmed.

Brezack said everything in the business she runs with two of her three sons, President Scott Brezack and Vice President David Brezack, is a total loss, with one notable

ery, she said.

“But where do you move, and people tell us we can’t move,” Brezack said. “And how do you leave your community?”

In its three decades, Brezack said, the Bagel Bin has built a following with students at St. Robert Bellarmine School, a



At the ceremony recognizing crews who put out two major fires within 24 hours ... From left, Mayor Jim Suttle, Omaha Fire Chief Mike McDonnell, Capt. Steven Swann, Acting Asst. Chief Dan Stolinski and Police Sgt. Kevin Hooshe.

exception. "We're hoping the safe [is OK]," Brezack said.

That safe is buried under concrete. That wasn't always the case. Halloween night 15 years ago, the contents of the Bagel Bin's

Catholic institution located south of the strip mall. The bakery also has devoted Jewish customers.

"We've got to rebuild," Brezack said.

According to a message posted on the Bagel Bin Web site, plans are to begin re-

everything else is replaceable — machines and equipment," Meyers said.

Metro Magazine, a monthly publication whose 20th anniversary coincides with the fire (almost to the day), is also thankful data was salvaged.

The magazine's Editor/Creative Director Rob Killmer retrieved backup disks, containing data such as archives going back a decade, when he saw flames coming from the strip mall Thursday night. Both Killmer, and the publication's Founder and Editor-in-Chief Andrea "Andy" Hoig, live within blocks of the business.

Hoig normally can see the Bagel Bin from a large bay window in her living room.

"But it was just white with smoke; I couldn't see anything," she said.

Only a few bays separate Metro Magazine from the Bagel Bin — where the fire broke out — so by the time Killmer went to retrieve the data, their office was already filled with smoke.

When the smoke cleared, aside from the data, the only things that were left were a few awards, including the magazine's 2008 distinction from the Greater Omaha Chamber as one of the top 25 companies in the city.

"Besides that, everything else had heavy smoke damage or was ice-covered," Hoig said. "The ceiling had collapsed."

The saving grace, she said, was that



Metro Magazine's damaged storefront.

February issue will be a go — though it may be delayed by a week or so.

Hoig indicated she has hundreds of stories of community members who have extended their support, in some cases, within minutes of the fire breaking out. She's also appreciative of the firefighters, whom she saw pouring water on hot spots at 6 a.m. the following morning.

Omaha Fire Department Public Relations Officer, Capt. James Gentile, said 60 firefighters worked on a rotating basis until roughly noon Friday to control the three-alarm fire.

Hoig and her team are accustomed to being on the "other side" — highlighting and supporting good causes — so she said it's overwhelming to be the recipient of this goodwill.

"I tear up, not out of sadness, but out of joy at all the people who care about what we do and the welfare of not just me, but everybody who works for me and the

Continued on next page.

West Omaha fire

Continued from preceding page.

business as a whole,” Hoig said. “They’re appreciative of what we do and want to see us continue.”

And they will continue in their old building as soon as it is rebuilt, though the magazine will likely have a new look and content.

“People will see different things, but I’m not quite sure what those are,” Hoig said, noting that recently there has been more of an emphasis on spirituality in the publication.

Hoig still marvels at the timing.

“As we go into our 20th year, and with this happening a week into the New Year, it makes it even more significant — you do start to look at the next 20 years and what you want to do,” she said. “It feels like there was an end and now there’s a new beginning, and how do we want to show up in this new beginning — as individuals and as a company — because it does change things — to what extent I don’t know.”

Prince of the Road Transportation is one business destroyed in last week’s fire that will not be rebuilding in the same spot.

In fact, the Ravenna, Neb.-based company started moving into a new, permanent location near 89th and F streets two days ago, according to Marketing Representative Amy Fox.

“In about two weeks we should be up and running,” she said.

Nothing from the former site is being brought to the new one, as the water and fire damage was so extensive, Fox said.

“We are able to maintain operations using a temporary office building but did struggle the first few days after the fire,” she said.

The Omaha Fire Department reports the blaze is still under investigation, and it may take some time to determine a cause as ice has built up to two feet in some spots.



Owner Andrea “Andy” Hoig of Metro Magazine congratulates Fire Capt. Steve Swann, shaking hands center, and members of his crew, from left, Tom Weaver, Priscilla Voss, Kyle Herber, Shawn Centeno and Mike Sena.

Mayor Suttle, business owners honor firemen

Mayor Jim Suttle and Omaha Fire Chief Mike McDonnell paid their personal respects to firefighters and citizens for their roles in putting out two major fires within 24 hours.

In comments at West Omaha Station 52, 10727 Pacific, Suttle said, “In the true spirit of community, during extremely cold and windy weather, people came together.”

About 50 firefighters battled flames discovered about 1:30 a.m. Jan. 7 at the Elkhorn Lanes, near 204th and West Maple.

the flames.

In the Bagel Bin neighborhood, the Office West Lounge and Shucks Restaurant offered city workers food, coffee and escape from wind chills nearing minus 40 degrees.

“Working together in the face of such extreme adversity is the mark of a great community,” Suttle said.

Adding to Suttle’s praise were Andy

Photos by MBJ / Bob Hoig



Hoig, whose Metro Magazine, located sev-