

IN GOOD COMPANY: ERRANDS PLUS, LC

Errands Plus does what clients can't do for themselves

Services range from grocery shopping to car registration

By NATISHA HALES
The Las Cruces Bulletin

As the community becomes bigger and lives get busier, John Helms, owner of Errands Plus LC, is helping those busy people get their to-do lists done when they can't do it themselves.

The business, started by Helms and his wife Anna, opened in June as the result of a business concept Helms came across 20 years ago.

While working in the grocery business in Albuquerque, Helms noticed a regular customer who would shop using several grocery carts.

"I finally asked him what he did, and he told me he had a shopping service," Helms said.

He filed the thought in the back of his mind, but the idea came back to the forefront when Helms found himself between careers at the beginning of the year.

"I did research, and I discovered running errands in addition to shopping was probably more relevant today," he said.

Now, Errands Plus will do anything for clients as long as it's "legal, ethical, moral and safe for employees," Helms said.

In addition to providing errands services such as grocery shopping, gift pick-up and delivery and taking pets to the veterinarian or groomer, Errands Plus also provides non-medical

services for the homebound and elderly, vacation services, waiting services and business services.

And everyone is a potential customer.

"Everybody runs short of time," Helms said.

As the business is just starting up, Errands Plus now has a small client base that Helms and his wife are able to handle.

"We're still small and able to respond quickly," he said.

He does envision business growth, however.

In fact, Helms' main goal is to have a concierge desk at most of the region's large organizations, including the hospitals, White Sands Missile Range, NASA and New Mexico State University.

Before he gets that far, he said he has to convince his customers that this is a service they need.

"It's such a new concept to Las Cruces," he said. "It's not new in other places, but it is here. People are 'timeshifting' already. Even when they go out to eat, they're paying someone else to serve the food, do the grocery shopping and clean up afterward so they can use that time to do something else. That's just one example.

"They just need to take it to the next step. There are things on your list that need to be done, but it doesn't necessarily require you to do them."

With the relationships he's



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Viewing everyone as a potential customer, Anna and John Helms of Errands Plus LC participated in the recent Baby Boomers Plus Expo, where businesses provided products and services to the baby boomer population.

created as a 16-year Las Cruces resident and while working in the Las Cruces real estate industry for four years, Helms said he's been "networking like crazy" to meet his ultimate goal.

His real estate experience has led to one service as a mobile notary, where he brings the mortgage paperwork to the parties involved, rather than having

them travel to different businesses.

The business also is a member of the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, the Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces and is working with the Las Cruces Newcomers Connection to further provide networking opportunities.

"Every time I tell people about

the business, they say, 'I know someone who needs this,'" Helms said. "I want them to know that, yes, that person can benefit, but so can you. I'm not here to replace family and friends, but every now and then, those same people very busy, too. Personal assistants are not just for high-powered executives anymore. This is a way to be in two places at once."

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rate. (The city) can complete the project a lot quicker because of the availability of the funds that this is going to generate."

White's Music Box, which has been in the Downtown area for almost 60 years, was one of the businesses along Main Street when the road was closed to become a pedestrian mall.

"We have a 37-year track record of knowing the pedestrian mall doesn't work, and we've lost virtually every business that was down here."

Bruce Gibson, owner of Dutch's Meat Market on the Downtown Mall, also witnessed the creation of the mall, and he voted in favor of the district.

"The mall needs all the help it can get," Gibson said. "They screwed it up. I've been here 48 years, and I've seen it all. They're just now making it work on the north end (of the Downtown Mall), which they should have been doing all along.

"I just hope it gets better, and it's been a little better here lately."

Gary Sandler's weekly column, Real Estate Connections, will not appear in this week's edition of the Las Cruces Bulletin. Look for his column next week.