

Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois Entrepreneurs

FurtherOPTIONS Inc., Scott Darnell and David Gotter

By VICKI BENNINGTON

GREENVILLE — A love of cars but a frustration with limited vehicle choices available to those with disabilities led Scott Darnell of Greenville on the pursuit of a product that became a business when he partnered with David Gotter of Brighton three years ago. Gotter and Darnell co-founded Further OPTIONS Inc. to develop vehicle entry

systems and other products for individuals who use wheelchairs. Gotter also owns and operates D & R Machine and Alton Machine Works. His experience growing up with a younger sister who used a wheelchair gave him a personal knowledge of some of the obstacles that Darnell and others face each day. Darnell is a quadriplegic who wants to help create new mobility options for others in wheelchairs.

Growing up in Florida, Darnell was a premier athlete as a star football, basketball and baseball player. He worked for 10 years as a

fabricator, heavy equipment operator, master welder and foreman, working in the construction industry. In 1991 at age 27, Darnell suffered a life-altering spinal cord injury as the result of a diving accident.



Darnell

Tapping into the work experiences of both, Gotter and Darnell - who say they have like minds - are creating several products to create new mobility options. The two are now launching their first patent-pending prod-

uct, one that was prompted by the fact that Darnell's only vehicle choice after his accident was a full-size van that didn't meet his needs.

Darnell wanted a lift system that would allow him to drive a pickup truck like he always had. The resulting DMS-3 wheelchair entry system has allowed him to drive safely and in style for the past year, he says. The standard installation can now be offered in numerous vehicles with major cost, cosmetic and installation advantages over competitive products.

Further OPTIONS Inc. was a recipient of a

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Entrepreneurship Center matching Challenge Award of \$5,000. The grant helped to further advance the design of the new lift that was initially hydraulic but is now operated electrically. Darnell says the lift was also "beefed up" and made stronger thanks to the grant funding. The SIUE grant came at a time when the company really needed to make some final modifications, he says, and the money helped bring it to the point of presenting the system to potential distributors.

The DMS-3 establishes a hybrid method, system and apparatus for moving a wheelchair-bound person into a vehicle. According to Darnell, the standard price of having a DMS-3 installed is similar to having a full-size van equipped for a driver who uses a wheelchair; it includes door openers and closers, a dropped floor, installation of a wheelchair lift apparatus, a tie-down system and a remote control. A full listing of vehicles that can accept a standard DMS-3 installation is available on the Further OPTIONS Web site.

Darnell says engineering departments at SIUE and the University of Illinois have helped with technology advisement in streamlining the products. The ultimate goal, he says, is to transform the industry so that Darnell and others who are in a similar situation are able

to experience the freedoms that able-bodied people enjoy every day.

Recipients of the SIUE Entrepreneurship Center's Challenge Awards are required to contribute funds equal to the grant amount toward the business requirements or project.

KMH Printing & Publishing Inc. Kelly Hunt

By VICKI BENNINGTON

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS — Seven years ago, Kelly Hunt started her own business on a shoestring budget, but with an idea she just didn't want to let go.

After working for more than 11 years in the printing and publishing industry, she had already completed extensive research, laying the groundwork for a healthcare magazine.



The company she was working for closed and Hunt opened KMH Printing & Publishing Inc. to take up where she left off in developing HealthNow Magazine.

Her company's primary mission is to provide the community with the latest information concerning optimal well being from trusted healthcare providers. The magazine offers doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers a way to inform and educate the community about important health topics. HealthNow is distributed as a quarterly insert for Belleville News-Democrat subscribers and is also available at local bookstores, pharmacies and medical office buildings.

KMH has received two Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Entrepreneurship Center Challenge Award grants. The matching grants allowed the company to expand into the custom publishing field. The first award of \$7,000 allowed Hunt to hire additional help for design and research for the first Madison County magazine; the grant enabled the publication to increase its circulation by nearly 33,000 and reach more homes and physicians. The second SIUE award of \$4,000 helped KMH expand into the custom publishing business by creating the opportunity for initial research, concept and design; Hunt says thanks to the Entrepreneur Center funding, her company is now able to offer a new level of expertise to attract clients.

Additionally, the company has added a Web site that will contain all issues of HealthNow and custom magazine samples. Links to featured doctors will make it easy for patients to learn more about the hospitals and doctors along with the extensive services that they provide. The company's recent expansion into the custom publishing field allows it to take this mission one step further. Hospitals and other healthcare businesses are connecting with patients through their own custom magazines. It is an ideal way, Hunt says, to reach patients on a larger scale and to educate them before they have a serious health issue.



KMH works with doctors, hospitals and other healthcare professionals to determine which topics are the best to feature. She says the magazine provides an ethical way to inform and educate the community about the services, treatments and new technologies offered locally to make patients aware of life saving treatments, non-invasive procedures and top technology that may save their lives or help them live longer and happier lives.


KMH's market for custom publishing will be hospitals and other healthcare organizations. The company has had requests for mock-up publications outside of the healthcare field. KMH creates everything from health magazines to corporate reports and anything in between including writing, design and photography. With custom publishing, KMH works with a client from concept development to a complete and fully designed mock-up.

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IN THE SIXTIES, WE BROUGHT THE ARCHITECT AND PUBLISHER TOGETHER. WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU EXPECT (FROM THE DECADE OF LOVE, PEACE AND UNCONVENTIONAL THINKING?)

WHILE OTHERS WERE BUSY WITH SITING AND ROCK FESTIVALS, WE USED THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES TO DEVELOP A NEW WAY OF BUILDING: DESIGN BUILD. GENERATIONS LATER, CLIENTS ARE STILL SAVING TIME AND MONEY. COMMUNICATION IS CLEAR AND PRECISE AND EVERYONE'S SLEEPING A LITTLE SOUNDER. FOR MORE ON DESIGN BUILD AND OTHER UNCONVENTIONAL THOUGHTS, PLEASE GO TO KORTECO.COM.



1244 I. U.S. HIGHWAY 40 • P.O. BOX 146 • HIGHLAND, ILLINOIS 62249 • WWW.KORTECO.COM • 618.654.8611