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Business

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Kathy Boston, left, founded Kathy's Care Cards, a line of cards for people with cancer. Tish Neuhardt, center, a cancer survivor and friend of Boston's, was Boston's inspiration for the line. At right is Kelly Howe, the company's marketing director.

Delicate sentiments

Company tailors cards to cancer patients, the very ill

By Liz Pecek
THISWEEK NEWSPAPERS

A Westerville company fills a void that Kathy Boston discovered in the greeting-card industry two years ago. Kathy's Care Cards are for people suffering from cancer, pain, disease and what Boston refers to as life-altering events. Boston, a 23-year registered nurse, founded the company after unsuccessful searches for cards that said what needed to be said for friends with cancer.

The company's cards, which cost \$3 each, are checked by survivors for approval. Artwork is donated from around the world. Boston and Kelly Howe, who serves as the company's marketing director, write many of the cards' sentiments.

"We cry a lot in this company," Howe said. "We know we got it right when we both well up with tears."

Sold at a dozen locations in four states and online at www.kathyscarecards.com, Kathy's Care Cards are printed locally.

Boston keeps an inventory of 40,000 cards and 50,000 envelopes in plastic containers in her Westerville basement.

Some of the company's 45 card designs are

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The cards in the Kathy's Care Cards line cost \$3 each. There are 45 card designs from which to choose.



serious. Others, such as one with two monkeys on the cover, are meant to evoke smiles.

The sentiment inside: "Feel like screaming? Go right ahead. You deserve to."

"The key to getting through some of this is humor," Boston said.

Kathy's Care Cards aren't just for adults. A kids line is called Kathy's Kids Cards.

Since the business began a year ago, several thousand cards have been sold. A dozen people work for the business, though only the company's three sales representatives — two in the Columbus area and one on the East Coast — are paid.

The rest are, as Boston put it, "giving from their heart and time."

U.S. consumers buy about 7 billion greeting cards each year, generating nearly \$7.5 billion in retail sales, according to the Washington-based Greeting Card Association.

About 3,000 greeting-card publishers are active in the United States.

Boston spends 25 to 30 hours a week on the business, and works full time for Riverside Radiology Associates in Columbus.

The company is "about people and caring," she said.

Otterbein College assistant professor Jiten Ruparel's undergraduate business-policy class took on Kathy's Care Cards as a project last quarter. He said the students developed business, marketing and Web strategies.

He said he thinks the business has every chance of succeeding.

"She's a caregiver and she's a nurse," Ruparel said. "She wants to touch people who send a card as well as those who receive them."

A portion of the sales will be directed to a foundation to award nursing grants and scholarships, Boston said.

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