

Photography by Alisha Young

# *Woman* In BUSINESS 2019

supplement of **THE SOUTHERN** READER 2019



says, sitting at the computer, she's "self-taught," and this process is continuously evolving. She laughs, and looks around, and then explains, she does "everything except the printing press." It's hectic as the business is nearing the holiday season, and hundreds of jobs are coming in from all over the region. It's a challenge, Debi admits, and "you have to continuously re-invent yourself," especially in this digital age. "Growth is a challenge." While the Yerkes were raising children, Debi notes balancing family and work relationships was also important. "I never missed one of the kids' games," she adds, proudly.

#### High Points of Living and Working in a Small Town

"Number one, you get to live here," Debi says, without hesitating when asked about the benefits of living and working in Bishop, CA. "Everyone we serve gets to live here." Then, there's the "camaraderie." She enjoys the fact that others realize, "We finally got here. To work with the community that gets it, makes it a win-win."

Alex Printing maintains community relationships, and Debi says, "we are pretty tight with our customers." She is also very involved with the Bishop Chamber of Commerce, and has been on the Executive Board twice, and was the Chamber President in 2011. She is working with the community on dispersed camping awareness, the Adventure Trails, and is a member of the Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce.

## Alex Printing and 40-plus years of making printed impressions in a small town

Debi and Alex Yerkes, owners of Alex Printing in downtown Bishop, CA were once the number one PIP printing business in a small town (1983). However, Debi notes, "we've been in business since 1978." That's a lot of printing, custom banners, rack cards, wedding, birthday, and anniversary announcements...not to mention custom stationery, receipt and statement books, and business reports.

Debi is still creating the graphics, and doing the bookkeeping. She



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# Grown from Within



## **How investing in one of its own gave NIHD a strong leader & earned Mary Ellen Tillemans a 35-year career**

Northern Inyo Healthcare District salutes all of the women who are improving our communities, one life at a time. Found everywhere from the front lines of life-saving care to the support teams who keep the District operational, these women's contributions build strong foundations. Their collective efforts securely weave a path to the District's future.

Mary Ellen Tillemans is NIHD's Revenue Cycle Director. It is not the most straightforward job to describe, but understanding its impact within the District adds clarity.

In her role, Tillemans directs and oversees four departments – Admission Services, Business, Credit & Billing Information, and Charge Capture. These four departments together make up NIHD's Revenue Cycle. In the simplest terms, the Revenue Cycle is the lifespan of a patient account from its creation to payment.

"Several activities make up the cycle beginning with the patient registration process," Tillemans explains. "It moves on to the transactional financial record of their care experience, and finally, the analyses of these processes to ensure optimal, compliant, and effective reimbursement for their services. All this allows us to continue to support the medical needs of our community today and in the future."

While the work sounds somewhat daunting, Tillemans thrives on it. "I like seeing the whole picture come together from beginning to end," she says.

"The innovation of the service provided from the technology and the educated individuals delivering the care, to the reconciliation of business information, and ultimately the satisfied patient when their care is finalized and reimbursed as they anticipated."

The ultimate reward of her job is the people, both the patients she encounters along the way and those she works alongside. "Working with our aging generation of patients is probably the most rewarding for me," Tillemans says. "They have so much to offer us."

As for how she views her role, Tillemans notes that she prefers to think of herself as a member of a large team with the "honor to assist others with the significant work they do for a great entity."

"If you asked me what makes my day, it is the wonderful people I work with," she says. "I am satisfied at work. I am happy with all the people I work with, and our goals, and what we are striving to do. We are positive, and we do our best for the District, and most importantly, we do our best for the patients of our community. We truly are one team, working for one goal."

With 35 years of service in the NIHD books, Tillemans knows of what she speaks. Citing her mother as one of her

biggest mentors in life and business,

Tillemans fondly recalls her mother's strong work ethic and high moral standards. "She had a mantra of fairness, kindness, and a mainstay of keeping life simple," Tillemans explains. "She encouraged me to work with people, telling me I had a strong will for doing it right."

Tillemans found that her mother's advice served her well in choosing a career path. "I apply her mantra, and her moral of keeping decisions simple and ethical, and above all, fair and kind, thus no regret or hurt. I find this applicable to both career and family," she says.

Family is vital to Tillemans, and she notes she learns from them daily. "Because of their love and support, I have adopted my most important personal mantra: 'Take time to take time,'" she says. "They are my world." Her love for our older generations also can be traced back to her family. "They fascinate me, and it has been my nature since childhood to gravitate to them," she says. "I come from a large family, and as a child, it was with my grandparents and older aunts and uncles I preferred. I also spent a few summers as a young person volunteering at the nursing home."

When asked how she makes a dif-

ference at NIHD, Tillemans notes four aspects she hopes others recognize in her. "One, I believe in NIHD whole-heartedly," she says. "Two, being there for our team, supporting one another. Three, collaborating, listening, and working for the good of our community."

The fourth point deeply resonates with Tillemans, and she stresses it is something she reminds her team of often. "With the significant governmental influence in healthcare today, our work behind the scenes can become more challenging. We can sometimes forget the humanitarian aspect of it," she says. "This is the part we need to draw our focus back to when we might feel defeated by the bureaucratic side of things because this is the real heart of 'healthcare' for our District."

What advice would she offer to those hoping to pursue a leadership position with the community or NIHD? Simple. Tillemans harkens back to her mother's guiding hand and to those who guided her at NIHD during the past 35 years.

"Be ethical, hardworking, and listen to your instincts," she says. "Be professional. Be positive. Take time to learn, grow, and develop yourself. Invest in yourself and seek out the resources available to you. NIHD will invest in you as well because NIHD believes in developing and promoting its own. I and many others have developed and experienced growth opportunities here."

"Above all, remember, when you are providing good patient care and customer service, it says it all. Your patients are happy, your team is happy, and the sense of accomplishment is your reward."

— Barbara Laughon, NIHD



Mary Ellen Tillemans



**NORTHERN INYO HEALTHCARE DISTRICT**  
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# “ Diane Corsaro Insurance and a Home Town Business ”

“Bishop is my home”  
Diane Corsaro



It's a good idea to “revisit policies to update them,” Corsaro explains, and as a customer, Corsaro adds, this is done annually by Corsaro. “Educating clients” is important. Getting up-to-date on insurance matters is well-worth the time investment, and coverage changes with new regulations or requirements in each state.

Diane Corsaro, a native of the Owens Valley, brings 40-plus years of experience in the insurance industry, and as a broker / agent, she enjoys her business relationships with customers, many of whom she's known for decades. “Bishop is my home,” she notes, and educating people about insurance products and the advantages are a big part of her business.

Conveniently located in downtown Bishop, Corsaro is knowledgeable about health insurance. She has also assisted many older clients with Medicare options, Covered California health care plans, and group plans, and notes, “Everyone should get a free baseline physical [medical examination].” She adds, “No one should have to worry about costs.” Corsaro navigates the health care insurance products, and she can turn a complicated process into a simple, short appointment, with only a few forms to complete.



# DCI

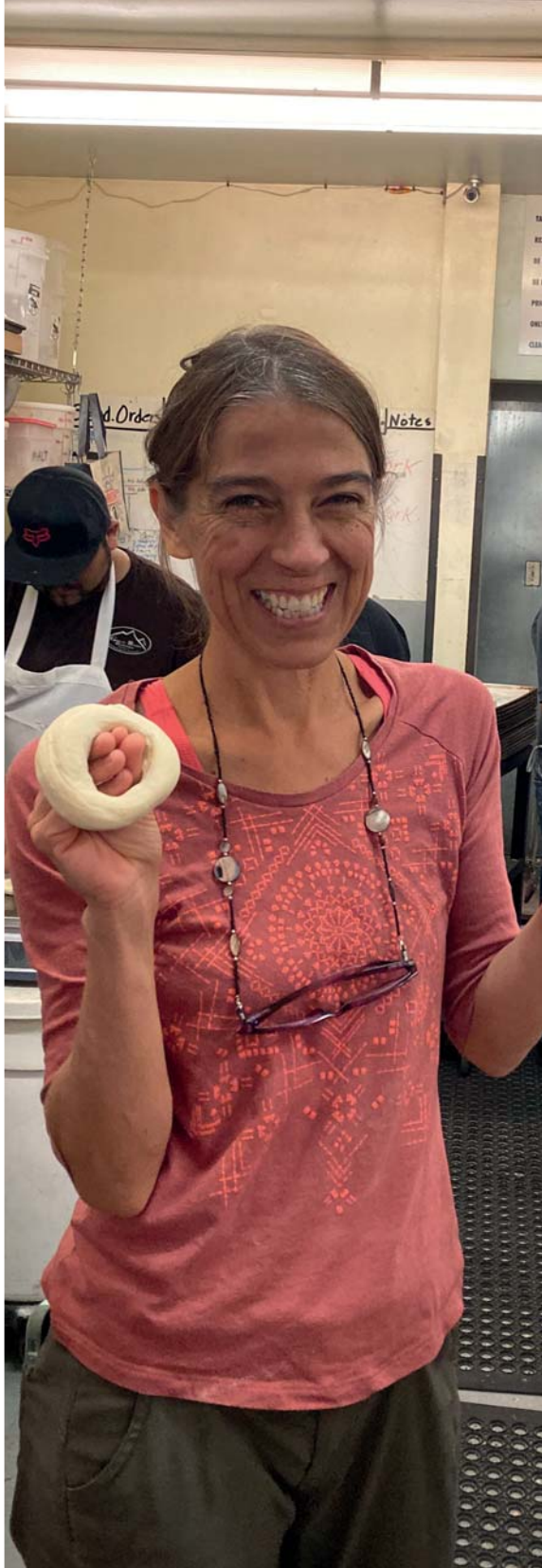
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# Great Basin Bakery's

## Robin Bolser Talks Bread & Butter

Great Basin Bakery's motto:  
"We rise above the rest."

The bakers are up at dawn, ovens turning out hundreds of loaves of bread, dozens and dozens of rolls and cookies, and the holiday atmosphere are all recipes for the Great Basin Bakery's continued success. And, at the top of the business' visionary list is owner Robin Bolser. She had a notion back in 2003, that her newly developing baking skills would carry the business to its current position in downtown Bishop, CA. She's entering her 16th year in a business, which as a formally trained biologist (counting bugs), she never imagined she'd be a part of with her husband, and kids.

Bolser has her sights on expanding the business, again, with additional places for the community to have meals, and she's also hoping to make this happen by the time she reaches her 20th year in business. The infrastructure of the business has continued to push into new corners of development, and she's no stranger to the hands-on process of pushing out walls, increasing working spaces, and creating new products to the signature baked goods' menu. She is also investing in the management team at the bakery, "so we can support each other."

High Points of Living and Working in a Small Town

"Personally I enjoy the location," Bolser says, as the small town bakery is cranking out artisan breads and lunch customers are lining up at the counter. The high points of being in business in Bishop include, "the connections that come from the small town. There are a lot of community members I know professionally and socially." Bolser also likes the fact that her children are in a "small school." She acknowledges that "upholding family values, with the staff," are important features of living in a small town. "We really value family." And, "we enjoy the loyalty [from customers and staff], that we get as a result."

Bolser joined the Bishop Chamber of Commerce as a board member in July, and she's "impressed with the staff [at the Chamber]. They do an amazing job." She also makes contributions to the Round Valley PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), through the sales of cookie dough. With a smile, Bolser notes, "It's all connected."



275 S. Main St.  
Bishop

760-873-9828



# TJ' Firing Line

## *"Follow your dreams"*

If ever there was a business woman who followed her dreams, and turned her ambitions of being a female mechanic in the Owens Valley into reality, it's Teri Jo Felkel, owner of TJ's Firing Line in Bishop, CA. Teri Jo doesn't take adversity or negativity into her auto repair business. And, since graduating from Bishop Union High School with top marks in auto shop, and finishing the rigorous college classes at Wyo Tech (formerly called Wyoming Technical Institute; a nationally accredited automotive technical college), Felkel has been preparing for being the best technician in the automotive industry. She bought Marsh's Automotive in 2013, and continues to build an enormous client base, working largely by herself.

Felkel recently attended an automotive conference and noted there were 31 women, at the top of their careers, involved in the industry. This brightened Felkel's smile to know she's not the only woman pursuing a career in a business usually associated with men. She attributes her successes to her schooling, both at Wyo Tech and online instruction. "I couldn't do it without education."

TJ's Firing Line takes Asian and domestic vehicles, but Felkel really specializes in Subaru. She decided early on to take the advice given to her years ago, and "specialize in something." And, the filled auto bays attest to the popularity of her work, and the vehicles in demand in the mountains. Her diagnostic skills are top-rate, and she sees herself as a "Puzzle Brain," type of person. She is able to pull a part pieces of the puzzle to ultimately put together a vehicle which runs, and her experience with being a state licensed California Smog Check inspection and repair station has given her a platform to know many makes and models of vehicles.

"You have to have the courage to believe in yourself," Felkel says, and she has a "deep love for Bishop, and my customers." It's her "home town," and the sense of community is very strong. "Bishop is beautiful," she adds. On the horizon, Felkel is working on writing a children's book, and she and her husband are building a fledgling business in Smith Valley, Nevada. There is a garage for turning a wrench now, and what's up next? "Follow your dreams."



## TJ' Firing Line

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[www.tjsfiringline.com](http://www.tjsfiringline.com)



Graviti Salon, in the heart of Bishop, CA, is bringing a new-age vision for hair and nail style, and owner Salvador Santana is leading this business into the future. Open since 2014, Santana says most of the clients come to the salon "by word-of-mouth," and the three hair dressers and manicurist serve everyone, all ages, by appointment. He notes it helps to have several skills in the salon business, including "being open-minded, being able to work with anyone, and being a visionary." He adds, "I like my work to speak for itself."

Santana is a life-long resident of the Owens Valley, and he enjoys knowing everybody, and the "more laid back" experience of living and working in a small town. "There is a sense of community," and "you become friends on a day-to-day basis." Although Graviti Salon's clients come from as far as Reno, Nevada down to Ridgecrest, CA, Santana finds it gratifying to be working in a business that highlights creativity, individuality, and welcomes people from all walks of life.

"It's exciting to bring something new to town," Santana says about his new-age fashion sense. He envisions someday creating a fashion show. "I would love to have a community run-way show," with hair, fashion, and make-up artists working with seamstresses, and "all of the salons," to bring this show together. "There are a lot of aspiring artists here." Santana would also like to "carry my own product line."

Graviti Salon is enabling Santana and the other stylists to "peak into the future and emulate that in our community," Santana says about creating an atmosphere of creativity. The salon has a speak-easy feel about it, with beaded-chandelier-like lighting, and stylish grand mirrors, setting the stage for the salon experience. Santana adds, the business is a "really beautiful thing."



## GRAVITI SALON a new-age vision for style

*"I like my work to speak  
for itself" - Salvador Santana*



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Photography by Garrett Rottner



## LOCAL GRASSFED BEEF

Barbara Bartlett, owner of Barbwire Beef, provides locally raised 100% grassfed beef to residents and dining establishments in the greater Eastern Sierra.

Barb felt a desire to link beef from cattle grazed on the abundant rangelands of the Eastern Sierra with the people who live, work, and visit the area. She incorporates her passion for conscientious rangeland management, considerate animal handling and a love of business into Barbwire Beef. She has partnered with Nick Dowers, an expert stockman, who is both a master at low-stress animal handling and a committed steward to the working rangeland in his care. The cattle graze in high mountain meadows near Virginia Lakes in the summer and in the winter on pasture and rangeland in Fish Lake Valley, NV.

Barb grew up in Hammil Valley and spent her time riding and showing horses, being an active 4-H member and a committed student. After graduating from BUHS, she attended Cal Poly – San Luis Obispo and graduated with an Ag Business degree. Professionally, she has worked on cattle ranches in Nevada, Montana and Oregon and spent 5 years at Farm Credit West, an agricultural lending institution on the Central Coast of California. Barb wanted to bring her experience back to the Owens Valley and build her business in the place she loves.

Local restaurants, markets, and direct buyers have taken a liking to Barbwire Beef – it's local, the cattle are not treated with hormones or antibiotics and it's nutritious. Barb uses USDA certified processors for all her meat and you can buy as little as 5 pounds or as much as a whole steer. She makes weekly deliveries along 395 and even straight to your door.

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Barb brings passion, drive, and exceptional personal service to the discerning beef buyer with her new business Barbwire Beef. Contact Barb at [barbwirebeef@gmail.com](mailto:barbwirebeef@gmail.com) to get an order form with all the cuts that are available.



Photography by Alisha Young

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## and Indy Coffee Roasting Company's Owners Say "It's Time to Take That Leap"

Downtown Bishop, CA—Deena and Gunner Davenport-Conway are the owners of two distinctly different businesses in the heart of Bishop, and both share, "Business, it's going really well." Deena and Gunner both work in the Luxe Salon, as stylists and barbers, and both are invested in the Indy Coffee Roasting Company's products and coffee room. And, when their businesses took off, while they live in Independence, CA, Deena notes, it was time to find a bigger place for the two businesses to expand. Diversify. So, they opened the uniquely decorated space in Bishop. "It was time to take that leap."

The historic old jail house building the couple moved into is anything but a normal storefront. The brick building was dedicated on June 22, 2019, by the E. Clampus Vitus, Slim Princess Chapter #395, in cooperation with the Inyo County Sheriff's Office, and a monument tells the story of the old Inyo County jail. Nearly 150 years ago, in 1870, John B. Clarke gave some land to Inyo County to erect a jail house, and in later years it was home to the Inyo County Sheriff, the Justice Court, and the Tax Collector.

Deena has been a hair stylist since 1985, and she owned salons in San Francisco (for 19 years) and Oakland, CA (for three years). Deena says she dreamed of living in the High Sierra ever since she was a child, and her family has been coming to the Big Pine Creek and Aspendell area for a very long time. Deena and Gunner bought a home in Independence, thinking to make it a retirement spot, but when they moved here full

time in 2016, Deena notes, it was time to make a full time commitment to the dream. "I'm a community organizer at heart," says Deena, who is also making a run for Inyo County's District #4 Supervisor's seat in March of 2020. She's interested in "nurturing small businesses in small towns," and notes, "you can really accomplish a lot in a small community." Deena is on the Owens Valley Growers board, the Friends of Eastern California Museum board, and has organized the Independence Fourth of July Parade for the last three years.

Gunner, whose business is flourishing with the Indy Coffee Roasting Company, says the biggest surprise for the coffee business entrepreneur is "going from cottage foods to commercial" endeavors. There are selections of pastries (which Gunner makes by hand) and hand-brewed coffees, which Gunner explains is "a European style roast." These types of coffee have names in keeping with destinations in the eastern Sierra. Sip on the "Twenty Mule Team Canyon," or try a house favorite, "El Camino Sierra," or savor their "Meysan Lakes Roast," or perhaps find a perfect combination with "White Mountain Wilderness," paired with an empanada (a turnover favorite in Latin cuisine). Indy Coffee Roasting Company's business features Latin, and international, flavor and music. Indy Coffee Roasting Company serves customers from Lone Pine and Olancha, to Mammoth Lakes, and all parts in between, including distributing coffee products to local vendors, markets, and mail orders.



**(415)823-0819**  
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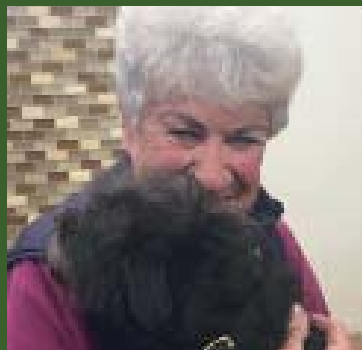
# Pampering Pooches is Roberta Carlson's Passion in Life

The holidays are here, and "grooming is a tradition with clients," says Roberta Carlson, owner of Pampered Pooches, specializing in pet cleaning, boarding and grooming. Carlson has been in the grooming business since 1987, and boarding since 2004, at Millpond Equestrian Center, outside of Bishop, CA.

Pampered Pooches maintains high standards at the business, and Carlson only handles animals with up-to-date vaccinations. She will also board animals with special medical needs, or pets who aren't used to being away from their owners. Her attention to the details of custom feeding programs, and which animal can be with others, is a part of the loyalty, from both animal and pet owner. There is a commitment to safety, procedures, and the facility Carlson has built from the ground up, changes with the seasons. During winter months, boarded pets get outdoor exercise, and indoor warmth and creature comforts, like the pet's blan-

kets and toys. Summertime brings pools for swimming, and shady spots.

Carlson also does extensive research about animal breeds, and is very knowledgeable about traits, grooming, and boarding needs. And, clients frequently learn more about their pets from Roberta's research, than they might have known if they hadn't visited Pampered Pooches. Many of her clients come to her by word-of-mouth, and the pets and owners come from "all over the place."



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# OUR WATER WORKS

## CARWASH

is Beery Family  
Pride and Joy

The Beery family, of Bishop, CA, are the Eastern Sierra's only full service car wash (in three counties: Inyo, Mono, and Alpine), and Shir-

ley Beery, owner, says they've been keeping vehicles cleaned up and shiny for 23 years and counting. Open six days a week, except holidays and bad weather, the family owned and operated business employs 12 staff, including Shirley, her son, Jeromy, a co-owner, and his wife, Jennifer, along with relative, Desi Johnston, who is the manager. Shirley says her husband, Joe (who has since passed away), and her son, Jeromy, came up with the notion to buy the business in 1997.

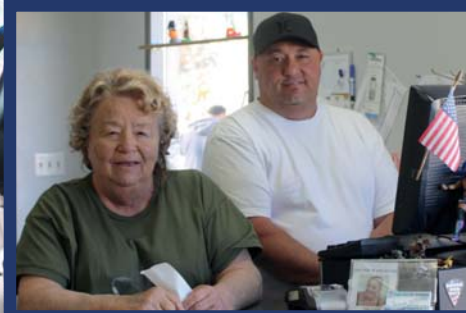
The car wash had been in existence since the 1980s, and the name, Our Water Works, is a play on the board game spot, and over the years the business has increased in popularity. Today, serving about 80 customers a day, as well as Quick Lube services for oil changes. There are specials which remain signature parts of the Our Water Works business, including their senior discounts, Ladies' Day discounts, and Jennifer has a Thursday Wash, which features Pick-up and Delivery. There is daily complimentary coffee and water, in the spacious and comfortable waiting room, and carpet shampooing, dog hair removal, hand washing and waxing, express wash to full detailing options, and "free WiFi and taffy (candy)," Shirley says with a smile.

Family members have been working there, says Shirley, from the very beginning, where the philosophy is "if you want money [for things as a kid], you have to work for the money." Shirley also notes that their children "know most of the people in town," and this is a big part of being

raised in a small town. Shirley's role at the counter includes working with the seniors, which she says she looks forward to every week. There are customers who continue to come from as far (as Hawaii) and wide to visit and get a top-notch car wash, and see a local iconic High Sierra business. The best part of living and working in Bishop, says Shirley, "All of the good people."

**989 N. Main St. Bishop**

**760-872-2070**



# Rockiwest

clever seamstress, Trina Favel,  
stitches us together

Rockiwest is located in Bishop, CA, and Trina Favel is the seamstress who handles alterations, custom work, and clothing lines. She starts her business description by saying, "I decided last spring, this is what I wanted to do." And, so she did, and Rockiwest (named for her mother) opened its door in August of 2019. The shop carries a variety of clothing for men and women, and she's getting quite a clients' list together, already.

Favel went to school to be a clothing designer, and when she finished college, Favel got a dog, and started a business. Her solo work in Bishop was preceded by 20 years of experience in the clothing business, and she says, "I have an eye for what is needed."

Rockiwest serves all ages, and is tailored for the individual. Her custom work includes fixing zippers on tents, backpacks, and making covers for kay-

aks, boats, or creating a unique piece of clothing for customers. Favel is undaunted by the size, shape, or complexity of the tailoring, or alterations, and she proudly notes, "I fix things."

Favel sees herself succeeding in her endeavors. Her goals are reachable. "Eventually, I want to have my own designer line, and have it manufactured."



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Front left to right Cheryl Hames Direct Care Staff, Jenny Park Director of Operations, back left to right Whitney De La Riva Direct Care Staff, Misty Andreas Job Developer/Direct Care Staff, Julie Robbins ILS Manager/Direct Care Staff, Krista Svacina Direct Care Staff, Sandra Marquez Transportation Manager/Direct Care Staff

# IMAH

## Offers Clients a Chance at Independence

IMAH, Inyo Mono Association for the Handicapped, is a 501(C)(3), formed in 1973, "by a group of concerned parents and community members." IMAH serves adults, age 18 and older, and the programs are available to any adult who utilizes the regional center services. IMAH supports the adults with working opportunities, at the thrift store, through training and resource services, workshops, job coaches, independent and supported living services, and transitional services. This includes 625 miles of transportation services provided daily for the adults in the program. IMAH is the first in the state of California to have an employee at Manzanar's Historical Site, a National Park. Employment includes, cashiers, a Head Start teacher's aide, Bishop City Park staff, and the staff at the thrift store in Bishop, CA.

Jenny Park, Director of Operations, and Adelina Rico, Administrator for Independent Living Services, work with the clients to maintain "TAGZ," a boutique store within the IMAH Thrift Store, in Bishop. This part of the thrift store features all new clothing, with tags still on the clothing, accessories, and outdoor gear. The store- within-a-store is completely client run, and it's a chance for IMAH's clients to get involved with running a cash register, inventorying items, and dressing the mannequins in fashionable clothing.

The holidays are a very busy time at IMAH, with bake sales and fund raising events. More than 300 pumpkin rolls were made for the Thanksgiving fund raiser, and IMAH's signature baked goods were also delivered to customers. The IMAH clients used the proceeds of last year's fund raising to take a trip to Universal Studios, and this was a big venture for IMAH. There are 27 clients at IMAH, and they are supported by individual living services, work opportunities, a day program, transportation, and there is a transition program for students 18 to 22 years old.

Parks says the best part of living and working in Bishop is that the small town is "more family oriented. And, the community supports small businesses." Rico notes, "you know and can relate to everyone. It's a small community."

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# Two Decades of Newspapers, and Small Town Businesses



Gadea takes an active part in the day-to-day operations of the various businesses, as well as meeting many of the community members who are a part of the newspapers. There are hundreds of customers to serve, and there are staff for the many businesses who also need direction. And, Gadea has spent decades doing the input and taking information for the newspapers, which require weekly distribution throughout the Eastern Sierra.

It's a lot to take in on a daily basis, and Gadea has numerous family ties in the region, which are very important to her. It requires a diverse set of business skills, each different for the moment. And, Gadea's sense of humor keeps the work atmosphere friendly and lively. Running newspapers, and other important downtown businesses in Bishop, is a full-time job, but Gadea makes the work personable and professional, all the while holding down the fort.

Eastern Sierra, CA--Co-founder, co-publisher, and bookkeeper, Donna Gadea, knows how to keep things running smoothly in a large enterprise, and as The Sierra Reader and El Sol de la Sierra's co-owner, she also celebrates in the successes of the businesses (in English and Spanish). Gadea

is well-known for juggling many projects, including assisting with the publishing of two newspapers (for 23 years), The Wash Tub laundromat, and numerous investment properties.

236 N. Warren St.  
• Bishop  
760-873-4747

[www.TheSierraReader.com](http://www.TheSierraReader.com)



# THE SIERRA READER