



(front left to right) Al Mittan, Diane Stopak, Lynn Lehmann, (back) Paul Hosford holding his son, Thomas, 22 months, Doug Young were instrumental in making the small business section of the Albion Public Library a reality.

Small business section opens in Albion Library

The new small business section at the Albion City Library is the result of the frustrations Paul Hosford, Albion, faced when he began doing research on how to start an Internet based business selling the Compact Discs and Cassettes he records in his own studio. There was also a great expense in the purchase of many business related books he would need to find information.

With the belief that he wasn't the only one who would benefit from the books, Hosford envisioned equipping a small area of the Albion City Library for the establishment of books, computer and software with guidelines, forms and the essentials needed to establish a small business.

When he met with the Albion City Library board with his idea, they approved setting aside an area for the project and even extended their hours to be more available for patrons to use the facilities.

Seeking funding for the development of his idea, Hosford approached the Albion Development Company that had been set up to oversee use of a percentage of the Albion City sales tax that had just been approved.

"They liked the idea well enough they gave \$1,000 for the project," he said.

After Hosford read articles about PrairieLand RC&D's plans to help small businesses grow in the area, he also approached them with his idea and the need for help in finding the materials, software and equipment needed for completion of the project.

"It was a fairly simple project for the RC&D to get involved in with a real quick turn-around and a good chance of success," Al Mittan, Acting Coordinator of PrairieLand RC&D, said.

"When Paul came to our council he had a good idea of what he wanted to do and what kind of assistance he needed," Mittan said. "It was a bit unique as far as RC&D projects go in that we didn't have to help him apply for any grants. He had the funding set up."

Mittan helped Hosford set up a committee consisting of himself; Hosford; Carol Speicher, Columbus, Administrator of the Northeast Library System; Diane Stopak, Albion City Library Board member; and Randy Michael, Albion.

Lynn Lehmann, KN Energy, a Division of Kinder Morgan, volunteered to work on getting computer equipment; Carol Speicher contacted librarians throughout northeast Nebraska for suggestions for business books and Mittan worked on finding surplus cabinets. Former Albion City Administrator Layne Groseth was also involved with the project.

KN Energy donated the computer equipment. Albion City Librarian Mari Hosford coordinated electrical work and getting lines run so the equipment was connected to the Internet. Software and books were purchased and the small business section of the library was opened in September.

There is not another library around that has such a section according to

Speicher. Software and books are available for start-up of a business, electronic commerce, business plans, customer service and marketing, legal issues, investments, bookkeeping, taxes, credit and banking, agri-business and franchising.

It is open to anyone in the northeast Nebraska area. "We want to encourage people from all around the area to use a resource like this," Mittan said.

"We have computer programs so people can develop a business program and they can print out forms such as business cards and so forth," Hosford said.

Hosford is in the process of working out his own business plans now and also on his new project of getting the Albion City Library on-line with its own website, "so libraries all over the country can set up similar small business sections," he said. "Since we already have all this research we could save them a lot of time by making it freely available."