



April 1, 2010

It's Your Northville Chamber Business: Beyer State Farm agency family owned

Tell us about your business, including types of services and/or products you feature.

At the Lisa Beyer State Farm Agency we offer 107 products and services including Commercial, Life, Disability, Banking and Financial services products.

How did you first decide to open your business and why did you choose this area?

I've always had the entrepreneurial spirit even as a kid I had my own newspaper route. Years later, as a stay at home mom I had my own calligraphy business and catering company. When my children got older, I pursued a career as a staff member of a State Farm agent as it allowed me flexibility to work while my kids were at school but leave early as they arrived home when they got off the bus. Then, once again, the bug to open my own business and become self employed hit again after six years of working for someone else.

I pursued a State Farm agency opening in Northville thinking what a lovely community it was. I was blessed to be given the opportunity to take over for what was originally 30-year State Farm agent Paul Folinis agency located on North Center across from Hillers. After five years of successful business operation we quickly outgrew that space and moved to the Highland Lakes Shopping Plaza on Seven Mile and expanded our staff. As fate would have it, March 1 we were financially able to purchase our own building back on Center Street in downtown Northville. We love so much being a part of the hustle and bustle of the other area businesses.

What makes your business unique?

What makes our business unique is that it truly is a family business independently owned. My husband, Art Beyer, serves as a licensed agent and office manager in charge of daily operations. Our daughter, Amanda, who just graduated from CMU, is pursuing an agency career with State Farm. Our 19-year-old son, Tim, will be working full time here this summer for his college break. The 17- and 9-year-old Ashley and Katarina can also be found in the office filing and helping out from time to time. In addition I have two licensed team members -- Paula Sphabmixay (whom after one year of working together found out they were distant relatives) and Lisa (Elle) Susalla. Many employers will say they have great staff behind them, but my team is truly in front of me. They handle the day-to-day transactions of the office which can be demanding. They always make me look good, and I am greatly appreciative of their loyalty, determination and dedication.

How has it changed since you opened?

When we first opened our doors, it was quite comical as my furniture was late arriving and it was literally my husband and I set up on two card tables with a phone between us open for business. We started with 500 households, and within nine years we have grown to just under 2,000. Over the years I have gone from salesperson handling each and every transaction to CEO of my business, training staff, meeting with clients for annual insurance and financial reviews, handling administrative duties and professional development.

How has the recent economy affected your business?

The economy has affected every business owner, and even though insurance is a requirement in Michigan it still has impacted us as well. We have really had to show our added value and benefit of a local agent. We proudly offer "country-club" service and encourage clients to stop by for a cup of gourmet coffee and to just chat about what's going on in their lives. When people have a bad day it is not uncommon for us to drop off an apple pie at their home to brighten their day. For fires and more serious claims I get a personal call at my home and have had to be at the scene if only to provide lunch and a shoulder to lean on. I try to truly be the "a good neighbor" people see on TV and make that a reality. I am blessed to have a thriving business here in Northville and owe that to the families that find value with my agency.

Any advice for business owners?

The best advice I could give to business owners is twofold: Empower your employees by being a leader and not a micromanager and to show gratefulness to your clients. Customers in general expect basic good service, but that is not enough. We need to provide outstanding customer service each and every time we interaction!

What's in store for the future of your business?

We recently purchased a building and now have a permanent home here in Northville. Two additional employees will be coming on board in September. One will handle administrative duties for the agents and the other will be a commercial specialist. We are hoping to continue improving our business and having a strong future helping the people of Northville manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams.

Additional Facts

Details

Business Name: Beyer Insurance Agency, Inc. - State Farm
Address: 209 S. Center St., Northville, MI 48167
Your Name/Title: Lisa Beyer/agent, owner
Business Opened: Dec. 1, 2000
Number of employees: three
Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday
Your Business Specialty: insurance and financial services
Phone: (248) 347-4480
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