

**HOME-BASED BUSINESS**

*Kids also reason for cottage ventures*

# Children biggest distraction for home-based owners

Although she worked full-time after her first child was born, Lynette Ruhge really wanted to be at home.

"Then I was sitting at work one day doing some repetitive task, and I thought, 'I could be doing this at home,'" said Ruhge, who started Home Nettework in Lincoln in 1989 and moved the business to Fremont three years ago.

But while kids remain the reason Ruhge operates her clerical business, which specializes in bulk mailings, they also remain one of the biggest distractions to getting the work done.

For Steve Lambert, low overhead and flexibility were the driving forces behind operating Corporate Communications Group out of his home in Omaha, but kids — a 14-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son — have become one of the reasons Lambert is considering space outside of his home. Complicating the situation is the fact that Lambert's wife operates Candy Wrappers, a bulk candy store at 84th and Brentwood in Papillion.

"No one truly understands my 8 to 5 work hours because they see me in my office at 4 in the morning," Lambert said. "Because they see you there at all hours, they stop respecting 8 to 5. Although I set rules, everyone assumes because I work out of my home that I'm flexible. I think efficiency drops when you work at home."

Lambert started the company in 1990 in Naperville, Ill., later moving it along with his family back to Nebraska. From his home here, an office in Chicago, a printing subcontractor in Des Moines and a telemarketing subcontractor in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Lambert offers communication services ranging from mailings to telemarketing, video production and voice and interactive communication.

And while Lambert focuses on sales and subcontracts production, he sometimes finds the urge to cross that line

tempting. "If I have a customer who wants to send 5,000 letters, I can send it to a source in Des Moines and it might cost 25 cents a letter," Lambert said. "You start analyzing that and thinking, 'I have lettershop equipment and a laser printer. I



**S. Miller**



**D. Miller**



**Ruhge**

could do it for maybe 7 cents a letter instead of 25 cents.' The distraction is the opportunity to make more money by getting into production."

So why not do the production and profit the \$900 difference? "Although production seems easy, it becomes tedious, and I'm not an expert in graphic arts, printing or programming," Lambert said.

It's that kind of focus that has enabled Linda Stewart to operate Bindery Direct in Lincoln for more than three years.

Having worked for the bindery departments of several printers, Stewart thought the city needed an independent shop.

"I'm pretty focused," said Stewart, who likes the way being home-based fits her schedule, including time with her grandchildren. "I work seven days a week. If anything, I find it hard to find time for other things besides work."

Darlene Miller has been the office manager for son Steve's home-based photography business since she retired from AT&T three years ago. While Steve works during the day at AT&T's Omaha plant as an audiovisual photographer, his mother fields phone calls for customers seeking a wedding and on-location photographer.

But while other home-based businesses concentrate on the business rather than leisure, Darlene Miller goes about her yardwork and other chores, stopping to handle calls and appointments as necessary any time of the day.

"I can stay and do my own thing, and when my phone rings, then I'm at my business," she said.

"I could use an answering machine, but we've gotten more business with her handling that part," Steve Miller said.

While Darlene sees a slight drawback in having strangers come to her home, the floor plan of her house provides for an office space near the entry — although bookkeeping occasionally spills over to the kitchen table.