

(As reported by The Langley Times)

Layoff, interests equals new venture

Andrea Chapman's love for her horse led to a new business venture in herbal horse medicine.

In 1997, Wandering Prince, a gentle nine-year-old thoroughbred owned by Chapman and her daughter, Brittany Linde, was training as a three-day event competitor. Affectionately called Alf (after the 1970's sitcom character, because of his distinctive nose) Wandering Prince was becoming a force to be reckoned with that season, until a fateful day in June.

Running playfully through the fields at a South Langley farm, Alf jumped over a muddy patch only to end up sliding on a second patch of muddy grass. His front feet landed solid, but his back legs slid forward into his front. In a hasty attempt to balance himself, Alf's back leg had overlapped his right front shoe, literally ripping a full quarter of the front hoof totally off his foot.

Chapman and Linde, watching from the barn, realized something was very wrong. Once they had rinsed and washed Alf's bloody foot with saline solution, they saw the full extent of the damage. One quarter of the right front hoof had been severed from just beneath the coronet band right down to the sole.

Alf was placed in a foot cast and rendered pretty much immobile for a full month in his stable. She noticed all of Alf's legs began to swell considerably due to the continuous stabling.

After numerous consultations with veterinarians, Chapman became frustrated with the lack of natural remedies available to ease the swelling in Alf's legs.

She had always been interested in herbal remedies for herself and her family and was very familiar with the anti-inflammatory properties of witch hazel.

A small tree or deciduous shrub with olden yellow flowers, Hamamelis virginiana has been used as a medicinal herb by First Nations people for hundreds of years. Wondering if a treatment of witch hazel in one form or another might relieve Alf's discomfort, Chapman embarked on a fact-finding mission. She started with a book titled Homeopathic Materia Medica, by W. Boericke, and read it from cover to cover.

One primary consideration throughout her research was to ensure that whatever herbal remedy seemed to relieve the swelling, it had to be applied topically and it had to be gentle on the skin. After considerable trial and error, she devised a formulation to produce an all-natural liniment with witch hazel, and a combination of eight other medicinal plant products.

While Alf remained confined in his stable, Chapman began treating his leg inflammation with a product which is known today as Chapman's Premium.

Within days, she noticed a significant decrease in the swelling, and some other interesting improvements. Her horse had become anxious and depressed during recovery, but whenever she applied the liniment and gently rubbed it over his legs and back, he seemed to relax, as if it might even be relieving the pain.

She was convinced it was her liniment which was helping Alf, since he was receiving no other treatment. After a month, the vet removed the cast and Alf gingerly began the road to a full recovery. Throughout the recovery process, Andrea continued to apply the liniment since it seemed to have such a soothing effect on him.

Chapman and Linde were pleased with their horse's recovery and life continued on as normal, more or less. Chapman, however, began to test the



After being laid off, Andrea Chapman parlayed her knowledge in sales, graphic design, horses, and herbal healing into an entrepreneurial enterprise, creating Chapman's Premium All Natural Liniment for horses and humans. (Photo by John Gordon, courtesy of The Langley Times)

product on her own aches and pains, spraying it on an arthritic knee.

"I was stunned that almost immediately after applying it, the pain would almost totally disappear. You can feel it work almost on contact. It doesn't mask anything, but relieves the pain so you can get on with your life."

In December 2002, Chapman was laid off, and with no immediate employment prospects, she "loaded up the credit cards" in order to produce and market the liniment she had been using just for herself and her own horses.

With a background in sales, she mustered up the resolve to take 200 bottles of Chapman's Premium All Natural Liniment to as many of the feed and tack stores in B.C.'s Lower Mainland as possible.

"I just talked it up, told the owners and sales people what it had done for Alf and for myself. I really liked my product. I was passionate about it and really believed in it. Before I knew it, all my 200 bottles were sitting on store shelves all over the place and all the product sold!"

Without really realizing it, she had combined her talents in sales, graphic design, love of horses, and passion for herbal healing products, and parlayed them in to an entrepreneurial enterprise.

"The true debut of the product line came at Spruce meadows in Alberta this past September," says Chapman. Spruce Meadows events such as the Masters Tournament attract equine people from around the world with hundreds of thousands of attendees.

"The response was phenomenal. I had a tester there. As people walked by I just asked if they had any aches and pains and would they like to try a spray or two on the affected area? Other exhibitors started coming to my booth and asked for some to apply to their aching legs, feet and backs, sore from standing all day at the trade show."

She recalls one vendor, from a saddlery in Ontario:

"Nathan called it voodoo because he was amazed at how quickly it relieved his aching knee. He couldn't believe anything could work so fast. People would walk over, try a sample, walk away, and be back within minutes to purchase a bottle." Sales are steady but Chapman realizes it takes time for the market to grow. Word of her product is spreading. At an expo in Chilliwack, many visitors stopped at her booth to say they'd heard of the product, and to ask for a sample spray.

Kathy Lifton, well-known horse trainer living in Langley, B.C. has used Chapman's Premium on both herself and many of her own horses. Kathy comments that she is impressed that something so simple is able to work so well.

Currently, Andrea ships it to equestrian centers, tack stores and natural health product stores in B.C., Alberta, Ontario and as far a way as Florida, Texas, Arizona, California and Germany. And the product has been picked up by national distributor Canadian Centurion Supply, known as the "horse health expert in Canada."

"I'm a lot happier now because I found what (work) I was meant to do. I finally listened to my heart, and now I thoroughly enjoy being an entrepreneur." She is confident the product is getting more human than equine use, and that's OK with her.

"What's most rewarding for me is when someone recognizes the Chapman name, tells me they've used on themselves or on an elderly person's arthritic joints, or on their horses' injury and how much the liniment has helped."

Alf and Linde have continued competing throughout Canada and the U.S., "always (placing) in the top three," including firsts, says Chapman.

For information on the liniment, contact 604.532.8083, toll free: 1.866.797.8045 or visit www.stablesolutionsltd.com.