



Ross and Laura LewAllen, LewAllen & LewAllen

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ALFAYA

■ **LewAllen & LewAllen**, the tiny but high-impact jewelry gallery on the northeast corner of the Plaza, exudes the warm vibe of its owners, the father-daughter team of Ross and Laura LewAllen. A successful duo for 20 years, they combine a love of jewelry-making with a dedication to holistic living: Ross maintains a shamanic and healing practice, while Laura is an outdoor-sports enthusiast.

The pieces they design, of sterling silver, gold, and gemstones, are manufactured in the industrial workshop where Ross started in 1972, a year after moving to Santa Fe from Illinois. Ross then opened the gallery downstairs in 1987 to create a retail space to sell his work. The pair draws inspiration from years of world travel, together and individually, as well as from their own personalities. “My style is a little more playful,” says Laura, who designed the company’s best-selling Ascent bracelets, custom-made with mountain-climbing rope and silver or gold beads. Ross, who invented the Earcuff in 1978, imbues his EWOP (Everything’s Working Out Perfectly) beads with the “ability to create wellness,” he says. Protection and Letting Go are the names of two. “I have a romance with each design,” Ross adds. “Then I let it go to find its own path in the world.”

Because many pieces have a collectible aspect or a specific meaning—friendship medallions are another line—that path often leads back to the LewAllens. “People return, wanting to know what our recent life experiences have been,” says Laura, “and I feel honored by that.”

105 East Palace Avenue, 505-983-2657, www.lewallenjewelry.com

■ To everything there is a season. For Gene Butler, owner of **The Firebird**, that means fireplaces for fall and winter, drip irrigation for spring and summer, and outdoor grills for summer and fall. This unique product mix is purveyed from an establishment that has the feel of a village hardware store, complete with shelf upon shelf of valves and fittings, plus first-name greetings between staff and customers.

Butler, a cheerful Texas native who moved to town in 1974 and bought the store 14 years later, loves the personal aspect of the business. “We’re about relationships,” he says. “Most of our staff members hold various industry certifications, have been here five to seven years, and like to take time to consider a customer’s lifestyle and objectives.” Butler is so customer-conscious that he even surveyed a couple dozen wholesale and retail clients before deciding to move the store to its current 7,000-square-foot space off St. Michaels Drive in 1995—accessibility is essential because the store is the leading drip-system supplier in northern New Mexico. And he often gives new products to irrigation contractors to test; if they don’t like them, Butler won’t carry them.

What he does stock, he says, are good-quality wares that add value to the life of the middle-income homeowner—from modern European stoves and the more traditional cast-iron versions to fireplace accessories and stainless gas barbecue grills—all of which are pleasing to the eye. After all, says Butler, “You probably use your fireplace and grill only six months of the year, but you look at them for twelve.”

1808 Espinacitas Street, 505-983-5264, www.thefirebird.com



Gene Butler, The Firebird

Simply paging through **Design With Nature's** portfolio of gardens can transport you to a place of serenity. Even the noisy construction in the nearby Railyard can't break the spell that envelops you as you sit beneath an apricot tree at the back of the design-build firm's 80-plus-year-old adobe on Romero Street and listen to the peaceful song of the carved-boulder fountain.

Word of mouth is primarily what's led owner-designer Donna Bone to where she is today, managing a business that designs some 50 gardens every year for clients in the Santa Fe area. The trained art historian and lifelong gardener began her company in 1995 with Tracy Neal (and later co-owned it with Molly Mehaffy), after visitors to her home were impressed by her landscaping and commissioned her to create their gardens. She now employs four other people, including a horticulturist, to integrate a home's architecture and the client's aesthetics with the local environment.

"If you really observe nature, it offers you all sorts of ideas," says Bone. She finds that paying attention to local microclimates is one key to designing a space that's compatible with its natural setting. On the north or east side of a house, for example, her team might plant aspens or columbine, which are closely related to a mountain environment. To the south, which gets stronger sun for longer periods, chamisa or other desert plants thrive.

Whether it's an "untidy garden, abundant in the texture of seedheads" of a renovated Betty Stewart home, or a central courtyard with a fountain made of local rocks for a new home by Paula Baker-Laporte, "each project has its own personality," says Bone. The size of the commission doesn't matter, either; container gardens, courtyards, multiple outdoor living spaces, and estates all receive the same customized treatment: harmonization with their surroundings.

129 Romero Street, 505-983-5633, www.designwithnatureltd.com



Donna Bone, Design With Nature

"Sometimes people equate 'decorative' with 'nonessential,'" says Kim White, owner of **Statements In Tile/Lighting/Kitchens/Flooring**. But spend a minute in her showroom, and it's hard to imagine living without the small works of art she calls "decorative" tile and lighting.

White, a former New Yorker, lets her products be the show. From hand-painted Mexican sinks to blown-glass pendant lamps to hand-made mosaic tiles of glass, china, and found objects, the merchandise is often produced by small companies or local artists. White has doubled the number of vendors since she purchased the business in 1999 after serving five years as its leading salesperson, and she chooses the intriguing array by traveling to international trade shows and regional studios. Although she stays abreast of which features clients like—such as glass and metal, which have become popular recently—she likes to leave the comfort zone as well. "I display new lines so people can warm up to them," says White.

Clients include local architects, designers, and contractors as well as homeowners from around the country. Professionals and lay customers alike benefit from the guidance of her staff members, says White, all of whom have a background in design or sales of similar products. "I just want to look around' lasts about five minutes here," she points out. "The choices can be overwhelming, so we help them narrow the field."

1441 Paseo de Peralta, 505-988-4440 ❁



Kim White, Statements In Tile/Lighting/Kitchens/Flooring