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# of Women Influence

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achievers

February 25, 2011 | Section 2

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**Patti James**

Vice President  
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ENTREPRENEUR

## Heather Davis

Nashville Paw Magazine

Heather Davis is founder and publisher for the five-year-old *Nashville Paw Magazine*, which means she wears every hat from advertising and marketing to content and design. She calls the magazine a "grassroots labor of love," and in its short history, the free magazine's readership has grown to more than 50,000 and it is cir-

culated in seven counties.

But it hasn't been an easy road. Davis said the magazine nearly folded a few times early on because of financial struggles.

A Chattanooga native, Davis moved from Chicago to Nashville in 2005 to be closer to home. For a year, she networked with local shelters, rescue groups, animal advocates and pet stores. In April 2006, she said she emptied her "savings account in hopes that it wouldn't all be in vain" to launch the magazine.

"In Davidson County alone, more than 10,000 animals are euthanized every year due to pet overpopulation. Thousands more are abused, homeless or awaiting adoption in local shelters and rescue groups," she said. "I have a very personal sense of responsibility to them through this publication."

The magazine holds community events to raise money for local animal rescue groups and spay/neuter programs.

"I never dreamed our reach would grow this fast or this far," she said.

Contact: [nashvillepawmag@gmail.com](mailto:nashvillepawmag@gmail.com)



ENTREPRENEUR

## Becci Bookner

Family Staffing Solutions Inc.

After 30 years in education, Becci Bookner launched her second career in 1993.

She took her passion for the region's youngest and began helping its oldest. In 1999, she opened Family Staffing Solutions Inc., a Murfreesboro-based company that provides personal care and in-home assistance for the elderly.

"Our clients and our caregivers are helping us demonstrate that being older can be a plus rather than a negative, that we can maintain and explore new levels of independence for our older fam-

ily members," she said.

As president and CEO of Family Staffing Solutions, Bookner is focused on growing the company and developing new markets and services.

It, too, is a skill she brings from her first career. During her education career, she designed and implemented for Murfreesboro City Schools in 1985 the Extended School Program, a before- and afterschool child care program that is now used across the country.

Bookner is also an author. She has published four books about aging, with another two projects planned for 2011.

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## In their own words...

### Bookner

**What was the inspiration for starting your own business?** For me, it was a family situation. In the late '80s, I had two aunts and a mom, and I was looking for some care for them. At that time, you just put an ad in the paper and hoped for the best. At that point in time, I was finishing up my teaching career, and I realized that there could be a real need out there. Everyone was concerned about their parents and their grandparents. So we just decided to take a chance.



### Davis

**How did you get started?** Straight out of high school, I moved to Chicago because I really wanted to be a fiction writer. My dream was really to become an author. In college, I minored in magazine publishing just by chance, but I would have never considered in a million years that I wanted to work in magazine publishing. Still, I have also done animal rescue my whole life, and the more I kept thinking about it, I kept realizing that there might be a way to meld those two passions together.



### Bookner

**What's a stressful part of your business?** You can't live on your laurels. In our business, a lot of clients die, a lot of clients go for rehab and a lot of clients move into facilities. You are always having to grow, and you have to add to that client base continually. Just when you think everything is going well, then you get to the telephone and get news that you weren't expecting.

### Davis

**How was it trying to start a publication in a new city?** When I moved here, I thought "How am I going to do this? I don't have any connections. I don't know a soul in Nashville." All I had was my really stubborn attitude and the feeling that I knew I was going to be alright. I also moved in East Nashville and was struck by seeing the sheer number of stray pets and neglected animals. At the same time, I ... know there are people with four or five rescue dogs in their house, and they are trying to do the best they can. So I just started reaching out to these people in a grassroots way. I would go out to the dog park and just strike up conversations with people.

### Bookner

**What was the scariest point in your adventure?** We had built

our business up, and we had to go through the ordeal of trying to decide whether to sell our company or buy the shareholders out. That was a really scary time. Why did I think that I knew enough at that point to be the chairman of the board and be the majority stockholder and make the right decisions? In hindsight, we had tremendous teachers. It was painful, but it taught me a lot. Moving from the role of a kindergarten teacher into the business world was so valuable, because it taught me to pay attention to details and don't just assume that it's going to work.

### Davis

**What was the hardest time for your business?** I started getting worried in the fall of '09 with the economy, because I started hearing rumors that a lot of pet businesses, many of them advertisers, were going out of business. I just remember lying awake at night in panic mode, because I had four years of my blood and sweat and tears into this publication. I was giving it my entire heart, not to mention all my savings. It was one of those things where the common sense side of me said, "You need to just let this go." But my heart kept tugging at me saying, "The animals need this. It's bigger than me."

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