

up Brewster

landscaping things, and to do my thing outdoors," she said. "One winter I thought I'd go downtown and do a little grocery shopping, so off I went and got stuck in a snow drift, but that was sort of a fun adventure."

Although Eicher does lot of home decorating consulting calls, she said she is actually just as busy with landscape design.

She said that since the ag economy has been down for the past few years, she has been able to help people use they what they have without spending much extra money.

The town of Brewster has been able to do that same thing, and have embraced what they have, by renewing the old.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press
Dawn Schultz, farm wife in the Brewster community gives Reva Eicher a helping hand with painting the giant sunflower on the building-sized mural.

Former med student at home on the farm

By Vera Sloan

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After graduating from Colby High School in 1993, LeAnna Soehner headed for Kansas State University as a pre-med student.

Two and a half years into her chosen field of study, she said, riding over the farm fields of her home county was like a good dose of medicine, and that's when she told herself she just didn't want to pursue the medical field any farther.

"With my parents' encouragement, I hired on as an intern for a crop consultant, Dick Weston of Ag Technology Company, during the summer," she said, "just to see how I liked the work."

Soehner took to it like a duck takes to water, and today she owns her own company, Tubbs Ag Consulting, and employs one or two people to help her each summer.

Soehner said that after she graduated from Kansas State University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Science degree in agronomy, she went to work for Co-Ag in Menlo as a crop consultant.

Besides consulting, her work also included precision ag programs which involved grid soil sampling, yield mapping and fertilizer application mapping. She said that after working there four and a half years one of the grower clients encouraged her to go out on her own.

It seemed like a good thing to do, she said, and when she did she had the support of many of the growers she had worked for.

She still scouts for them today, taking soil fertility tests, recommending chemicals, and consults with them from before planting to the end of watering, right through the last application of irrigation at the end of the season.

"Each year is different," Soehner said, "because there is a different problem to fo-

cus on most of the time, and crop technology changes constantly."

She said she truly loves doing what she's doing, and in 2008 she spent the entire summer as a pregnant crop consultant, walking in the heat and muddy fields and doing all the tests necessary to give the farmers the information they needed for a good crop. Then in November, when the season was over, she gave birth to a daughter, Libby, now 10 months old.

Soehner uses four wheelers to get around her fields and a computer and printer in her pick-up to produce weekly reports on the job.

Depending on weather patterns, insects vary each year, and she can identify most of them on her own, she said.

"With insect stuff," she said, "I can diagnose most of the problems myself." However, she sends her soil sample work to an agricultural lab in McCook, Neb.

She said she is not entirely unique as a crop consultant. As a member of the Kansas Association of Independent Crop Consultants, she said there are at least two women who have their own consulting business.

She and her husband Chris and little daughter Libby live 30 miles north of LeVant and she is no stranger to other jobs found around the farm. She fills in as tractor driver, has planted wheat, and drives a grain truck during harvest.

She and her husband, Chris, who is a Pioneer Seed dealer, farm together with her family in Kansas, and enjoy farming and ranching with his parents in the Idalia, Colo. area.

"I try to not learn too much about the ranching business," she said, "because I don't have time to work cattle. I like to do other things in the winter, so I bake and decorate cakes and sugar cookies, and have even made wedding cakes. It's totally different and I really like to do those things too."

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