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HEADLINE: Computer-design process puts stained glass within reach

BYLINE: START-UPS Dan Mayfield Commentary

BODY:

Windows are often overlooked in home design. Drapes and blinds are nice but can cut off natural light.

Tony and Mary Lou Christophersen have an option. They opened a Stained Glass Overlay franchise at 1131-B University Blvd. N.E.

The company makes custom stained and leaded glass with a special process that tints a solid sheet of glass. The finished product, which can be ordered in hundreds of textures and colors, has the look of cathedral-worthy stained glass.

"We make stained glass, but we do it with an overlay process so it's less expensive. But it's still leaded by hand," Mary Lou says.

The product, one sheet of UV-resistant tempered glass, is as strong as a piece of safety glass, she says.

"It allows you to put stained glass in places you couldn't. Because it's tempered, it won't shatter," she says.

Using a computer-aided design process, Stained Glass Overlay can create nearly any image or design, even from a photograph, in nearly any size.

This isn't the Christophersens' first retail experience. They had a furniture store in Waterloo, Iowa, 25 years ago. They moved to Albuquerque 20 years ago. Tony has been a real estate agent and Mary Lou earned an MBA at the University of New Mexico.

Stained Glass Overlay can be reached at 842-5406.

A bad screen door or shabby window screens can hurt the look of a home.

James Gonzales has opened a ScreenMobile franchise, a mobile window and door screen service.

Gonzales doesn't just repair or build new screens, he installs solar and retractable screens.

Solar screens block the sun's glare, resulting in less furniture fading and air-conditioner use, he says. And the screens, which can be custom cut, are easy to see out of, but difficult to see in through.

"I was in Arizona for a few months and every house out there has one. It keeps your house about 10 degrees cooler. We don't get as hot here, but we definitely get hot," Gonzales says.

Gonzales also installs retractable screens that pull away when they're not needed on a seat-belt like tension device.

ScreenMobile can be reached at 897-9939

Call it the HondaMobile?

Steve Anthony's Mobile Mastertech is another mobile business, but he fixes cars.

Steve Fiorino - he uses his middle name for the business because, he says, people can't always pronounce his last name properly - has been working on Hondas, Acuras and other Japanese cars since the early '80s in San Diego.

But, he says, "San Diego is so expensive. You can't afford to own a small business there and still retire."

So, in January, he started the company here in Albuquerque.

Although the company is run out of Fiorino's truck, he has devised special ways to remove heavy items, like engines and transmissions, from the cars. "I've got it down to an art," he says. As long as I have a dry place, I'm OK."

He keeps a cell phone handy at all times and says customers shouldn't be afraid to call at midnight, "because that's how I do my job."

Steve Anthony's Mobile Mastertech can be reached at 792-0921

Tribune reporter Dan Mayfield writes a weekly column on new businesses. If you have a news tip, call 823-3620 or e-mail dmayfield@abqtrib.com.

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