

On a mission ...

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Chance encounter leads woman on a business-helping path

A chance encounter at a local coffee shop led Sydney Smolla to a career opportunity she didn't see coming. Smolla is a small business owner, and the barista knew she was looking for clients, so he set her up with Gallup's Tourism and Marketing manager Jennifer Lazarz.

Smolla moved to Gallup in November after marrying her husband, who works as a pharmacist for the Gallup Indian Medical Center.

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Thanks to that chance encounter, Smolla is now working for the city and helping with the Coal Avenue Commons project. She serves as the liaison between business owners, the community, and the construction company to ensure everyone's on the same page about the project. She does this by designing signs, flyers, and social media posts on the Coal Avenue Common's Facebook page.

In an email to the *Sun*, Lazarz said she was excited to work with Smolla.

"Sydney Smolla is a welcomed new business addition to Gallup," Lazarz said. "It is exciting to have her talent and skill set present in our community, and I think she has much to offer everyone."

Before moving to Gallup, Smolla lived in Nebraska, where she worked for two separate natural resources districts doing creative work and education outreach. While working for those organizations, she discovered her passion for photography and graphic design. While she was working for those two organizations, Smolla soon saw a new business opportunity for herself.

"It was in those positions I saw a need for good photography and graphics/design of publications and simplifying information in a way that is enjoyable for the audience to experience," Smolla said in an interview with the *Sun*. "I just wanted to build my own business because I just didn't really see any other business models that looked like what I was looking for."

And thus, Sydney Norris Imagery was born. Smolla uses her maiden name for her business. Now she helps businesses create their brands and find their voices through her graphic design work.

Smolla mainly uses her graphic design skills for her business, but she explained how she uses her photography background as well.

"I utilize my photography in the back end of creating my graphics as a way to get inspired, find unique perspectives, and really study a subject," Smolla said.

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Smolla said one of her favorite parts about having her own business is the flexibility. She has clients from multiple states and can choose her own hours.

Smolla has some advice for people who want to get into photography.

“A lot of artists want to become their own boss, but there’s definitely nothing wrong with working in a professional field, because that’s where you learn a lot of your skill and a lot of your communication [skills], which all of that is super important when you have your own business because you’re representing yourself and your business so you want to make sure you’re portraying yourself in a good way,” Smolla said.

To find out more about Sydney Norris Imagery, go to <https://sydneynorrisimagery.com> .

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