

In Champlain Business Journal, by Joy Choquette  
Spotlight On New Business  
Published July 1, 2009

## Open For Business

### Birdsbesafe

Nancy Brennan of Birdsbesafe is making sure cats in the Champlain Valley and beyond don't end up looking like the infamous "cat that caught the canary."

Brennan began selling her brightly colored cat collars in March. As a bird lover, she said she was distressed when her cat, George, began bringing home dead songbirds.

While doing some research, Brennan learned that birds can see more colors than humans, and a bird's eye structure also allows it to see bright colors more easily.

Brennan said she made George a tube of bright colored fabric, which he wore around his neck. He hasn't killed another bird since.

"Someone should start a business," Brennan said she remembers thinking. "I'd solved the problem for myself, and thought everyone should have one."

Currently, Brennan makes the collars herself; however, plans are in the works to turn this task over to a New England-based factory in the near future. Nylon webbing inside the collars, adjustable size options and a safety buckle that prevents a cat from getting strangled on branches or other objects, have all been included in the Birdsbesafe collar design, said Brennan.

The collars are currently available at Guy's Farm and Yard in Williston and Montpelier, the Birds of Vermont Museum in Huntington and Shaw's General store in Stowe; they also are available online. Brennan said she's in the process of adding more stores that will carry Birdsbesafe, and intends to have them in national chain stores throughout the country in the future.

Brennan has worked previously in the nonprofit conservation field, including for the Green Mountain Club. Though she has no formal business training, she finds her past work in this arena has been an asset to her business.

"It seemed that all the elements were there," said Brennan regarding her start up. She also utilized the services of the Small Business Administration's SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) office in Montpelier and Essex Junction, which she found helpful.

Having a deep interest in nature along with her background in nonprofit work has also helped Brennan: she said if she were creating a product only to make money, she

wouldn't have started her business. It was her interest in bird safety and her love of the natural world that was a driving force behind her business.

Birdsbesafe recently participated in the International Migratory Bird Day, held at the Birds of Vermont Museum. The annual event was co-sponsored with Vermont Audubon. It included bird banding demonstrations, bird programs for children, live bird shows and games and activities. Brennan said she was pleased Birdsbesafe was included in the daylong event.

The mailing address for Birdsbesafe is 861 Mountainview Drive, Duxbury, VT 05676. The Web site is [www.birdsbesafe.com](http://www.birdsbesafe.com). The email address is [birdsbesafe@gmail.com](mailto:birdsbesafe@gmail.com).