

Open for Business > Rukha Academy of Healing Arts and Science

Owners: Shelli Stanger Nelson and Brent Nelson

Type of business: Licensed post-secondary career school

Number of employees: Two full-time employees and seven independent contractors

Location: Eden Prairie

Contact Information: 952-406-8382; RukhaAcademy.com

Tell us what your business does. We are a two-year post-secondary career school licensed in the state of Minnesota.

Rukha educates energy healing science professionals by providing rigorous coursework that not only instructs on the human energy field, psychology and traditional health science but also provides a richly meaningful personal growth experience.

Energy healing science is a cutting-edge integrative health care modality that facilitates one's ability to heal and maintain health. Professional practitioners are skilled at working with trauma, surgery, pain and acute and chronic physical and emotional conditions that may decrease a person's quality of life. Rukha graduates are certified professional energy science practitioners who are able to own and operate their own private practice as well as work in spas, clinics and hospitals.

Why are you launching it now?

The demand is on the rise for well-prepared practitioners as public awareness of the tangible effects of this modality has sharply risen. Mainstream hospitals in the Twin Cities and beyond are expanding their offerings of energy healing professional services.

We also saw the opportunity to teach a usable skill that would translate to small business ownership.

We see more and more people in search of personal growth and development to gain clarity and direction during these turbulent times.

Rukha's curriculum encourages students to discover how they want to live life and provides skills for how to achieve their desire.

Where did you get the idea for your business?

President and founder Shelli Stanger Nelson has a passion for bringing effective integrative health care modalities into the mainstream of health practices.

The concept was inspired by her experience as both a practicing cardiac nurse clinician and an advanced energy science professional.

Stanger Nelson wrote and performed a clinical research trial approved by the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: SCOTT TAKUSHI

Ann Agrimson of Minneapolis performs a healing ceremony on Lonnie Murphy of Bloomington (both are students) under supervision of teacher Shelli Nelson (center) during a "spiritual surgery" at Rukha Academy.



Dr. Edward Szachowicz of Edina concentrates during a "spiritual surgery" ceremony with fellow student Tara Samaha.

Board. The research, which was performed on total joint replacement patients at Fairview Southdale Hospital, showed statistically significant benefits to those who received the experimental treatment. Rukha's goal is for members of the medical community to increase their confidence in energy science as a viable and essential treatment option.

For this to occur, aspiring practitioners need a respected educational program. Our curriculum is taught by credentialed faculty with the focus of preparing graduates to be leaders in their field.

How did you develop your business plan?

We utilized MnSCU's MN Mentors, a group of business people-turned-educators who guide small

businesses to success.

How are you financing your business?

Personal capital gained through operating our own energy healing business.

How do you see current economic conditions affecting your business?

It is an asset to enrollment. People are looking for ways to generate an income in the face of fewer jobs. Operating one's own private practice allows for flexibility of hours and tax incentives not available as an employee.

Rukha's tuition is an excellent value when compared with traditional college tuition.

Our program offers a relatively quick turnaround time, with graduation from the standard

studies program after only two years and mastery studies in only three. Our schedule is suited to working adults who want to continue to work while completing their education.

What makes your business unique?

Rukha Academy is the only licensed stand-alone school of energy healing science within the state and beyond. The scope of our curriculum surpasses other programs.

We employ credentialed faculty teaching a wide variety of topics. We offer a unique course in ethics and the law taught by an instructor with 16 years of experience in higher education as a faculty member, associate dean, administrator and psychologist.

We have contracted with MN Mentors to provide a course in business management to educate students on business skills to promote success after graduation.

Rukha curriculum melds traditional Western medicine theory with holistic principles. Stanger Nelson's background as a cardiovascular nurse sets a tone at the academy that highlights the best components of traditional and holistic medicine.

Instead of asking students to give up every Monday night or Saturday for months, our classes meet for five days every other month. Students complete homework, reading and practice treatments between on-campus sessions. We also focus on personal growth and development. To that end, classes

are held at a local wilderness retreat center.

Lead instructor Shelli Stanger Nelson is the only blind registered nurse working in the state and one of a handful in the nation. Her passion, tenacity and success in the business world despite this obstacle lend inspiration to students.

What was the biggest obstacle? Becoming a business owner with limited business experience.

How did you overcome the obstacle?

First, we worked with Scott Taylor of MN Mentors. Next, we hired a savvy branding agent, Steven White of White Design Group. He gave us a brand and image that helped our mission and vision come to life. Finally, we acquired the guidance of a marketing strategist, Anne Hunter of Marketing Source, USA. Anne's clear direction helped us tell our story.

What will tell you the business is successful?

We strive for annual graduating cohorts who are earning an income as professional practitioners. We are taking applications for the 2012-13 academic year. Our class size is limited so that each student receives 1:1 attention. Our curriculum is appropriate for beginners as well as those who have completed other healing science programs and wish to advance their practice.

Interested in taking part in Open for Business? If your business is less than one year old, email us at businessnews@pioneerpress.com.

Open for Business > Mary and Myra Images

Owners: Mary Selby and Myra Smisek

Type of business: Photography

Number of employees: Two

Location: St. Paul

Contact Information: 651-489-4177 maryandmyraimages.weebly.com

Tell us what your business does.

We sell photo note cards and prints of landscapes, animals and nature through our website, and through craft fairs and retail outlets in Minnesota. We also offer a variety of other items featuring our images such as bookmarks, magnets, checkbook covers and journals.

Why are you launching it now?

We have shared a love of photography for years. After taking classes, we believed the time was right for us to share our images with the public.

Where did you get the idea for your business?

Mary came up with the idea to attach the photos to note cards. We have since expanded our line.

How did you develop your business plan?

We did research regarding supplies we would need to make our products and came up with cost-effective sources. Then we began talking to local shops and people we knew who might be willing to offer



Mary Selby, left, and Myra Smisek on a photography walk through Roseville's Central Park. Above right: samples of their work.

our products to the public.

How are you financing your business?

We are self-financed.

How do you see current economic conditions affecting your business?

In a depressed economy, luxuries and extras are the first to go, but hope people will realize that in this electronic age, giving a special card can bring joy to those who receive it.

What makes your business unique?

Unlike greeting cards that are mass-printed onto card stock, ours have the original print attached to the front to the card. Customers can choose the prints from our website. All our other products also include an actual photo, not mass-produced prints.

What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome to get this business going?

The first was finding sources for paper, envelopes and photos that would allow us to make our products affordable.

The second obstacle was getting our product into the public eye and getting people to see the joy that giving our cards will bring.

How did you overcome the obstacle?

We continually are working on finding new supply sources and talking to local shops about

handling our products.

What will tell you the business is successful?

When we start to see a pickup in sales at craft fairs and get return business from the shops that handle our products.

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