

it's your business

Quality, Iowa-made soap gentle on skin, clothes

By **M. MONICA GILLEN**
Ames Life & Times Staff Writer

Time is a key ingredient in Shannon Bardole's Little White Lye Soap. Bardole, 27, started her business in December and operates from her Ames home. Lye, lard, cream of tartar and a lot of time are combined and the result is, soap, a quality, Iowa-made product that is very gentle on the skin.

Bardole's process begins with lye and rendered lard from Iowa-raised hogs and some cream of tartar. The mixture is stirred for four hours before it is the right consistency to pour into molds, which her father designed and created. The soap continues to cure for two weeks, to ensure that the caustic lye is blended with the lard to make it gentle on the skin. Bardole carefully cuts and packages each bar and distributes them to retail outlets, all relationships that she has fostered. Bardole learned the art of making soap when she worked at Living History Farms and continues to share her excitement about the process and distribution of her product.

What is exciting about your business that draws you in everyday?

Since this business is so new, I enjoy the new opportunities to create relationships with retailers and customers due to a locally handcrafted high-quality product.

Where were you employed prior to this venture?

I spent four years at Living History Farms after I graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a bachelor's degree in family services. Within those

THE BUSINESS

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Specialties: Customers may contact Shannon Bardole directly to purchase Little White Lye Soap products. Bardole will deliver locally or ship products.

four years I was the Broom Shop Supervisor and 1900 Farm assistant domestic supervisor. On the complete opposite end of the spectrum, I am currently the office manager at Atlas Media Group, which deals in collegiate athletics.

What made you decide to open the business?

After leaving Living History Farms, I wanted to continue with some of the things I'd learned there. I can garden and cook at home, but I wanted to be able to bring a quality, Iowa-made product to the public.

Why soap?

Soap was a relatively easy and inexpensive start up. I'd like to get into brooms, but that's taking more time.



PHOTOS BY M. MONICA GILLEN

Above: **Shannon Bardole** started Little White Lye Soap in December. Using a time-tested process, Bardole creates a quality, Iowa-made product from lye, lard and cream of tartar. At right: Several molds are filled with soap. At this point in the process, it takes two weeks for the bars to cure.



How did you become interested in this process?

At Living History Farms, we encouraged visitors to participate in some of the daily processes at the 1900 Farm, and one of those activities was making soap. I remember sitting on the porch stirring soap at the 1900 Farm and thinking, "When I leave here, I think I'd like to keep doing this!" It's an interesting process to see an extremely caustic chemical turn into the gentlest soap you can use on your skin.

What are some other uses for this product?

I use my soap to wash my hands, as we did at the farm, but we interpreted that lye soap would be used for everything from bathing to laundry. I rub my bar of soap into my shower loofah and shave it up to use as laundry soap. One of my customers commented that it helped with itchy skin. I have begun to shave up some of the soap to use as laundry detergent. It's been very gentle on my clothes, and gets them clean. For a little extra stain protection, I rub some of the soap directly onto the stain, and it's been known to take out stains such as grease, ground in dirt and blood.

What is special about Little White Lye Soap?

Since it doesn't have any perfumes added, it is very mild and gentle on sensitive skin.

Describe your products?

A single bar of Little White Lye Soap is approximately 5 ounces. The molds I use are wooden boxes that I cut the bars of soap out of. Each bar is a little unique regarding shape and size.

What other items do you sell?

My dad and I make crocheted dishcloths, which we sell.

What is a price range for your items?

A bar of soap is \$4-\$5 and a dish cloth is \$5.

What have been customer favorites?

The gift set of a bar of soap wrapped in a dishcloth has been popular.

Why would you recommend Little White Lye Soap?

It's a mild, gentle soap that is good on your skin in whatever form you use it,

whether that is as laundry detergent, hand-washing soap or as a full body soap in the shower.

Where can readers purchase your product?

Little White Lye Soap is available directly from Bardole or at the following retailers: Wheatsfield, 413 Douglas Ave, open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; in Story City at RVP-1875, 526 Broad St., Story City, open Tuesday to Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Heart of Iowa Marketplace, 221 Fifth St., West Des Moines, open Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday; Living History Farms, 2600 111th St., open daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

RVP-1875 is the only location that carries dishcloths. It will also be sold at the Webster City Farmer's Market from 8 a.m. to noon starting Saturday.