

## New in NWA

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# Former vendor forms new search firm



Clockwise from left: Kim Ratcliff, Dan Vinson, Kari Utlej and Marvelyn Stout of Stout Executive Search in Bentonville.

Six months after founding the executive search firm that bears her name, Marvelyn Stout is looking to double the size of her staff to eight people within the next few months.

The former Kimberly Clark executive and team leader with Doane Pet Care is counting on her experience as a supplier to Wal-Mart and ability to develop relationships to crack into a market long dominated by Cameron Smith & Associates.

"I just saw the need in the supplier community for another recruiting firm," Stout said of her decision to launch her company last November. "I feel like there is room for everyone."

As she looks to grow the business, Stout's philosophy is to recruit from within Northwest Arkansas, rely on referrals from a network of contacts to fulfill client needs and develop relationships with candidates and clients.

"I won't send a candidate out unless I have personally met them. The candidates appreciate that we want to meet them and get to know them and so do our clients," Stout said.

The decision to start an executive search firm is a long way from how her own career began after earning a teaching degree from Evangel University in Springfield, Mo. She taught second grade at a private school in Dallas for two years before deciding to pursue a career in sales.

"No one would have me because I didn't have a business degree," Stout said.

That changed in August 1987 when she secured a regional sales job with Kimberly Clark's Dallas office calling on chains and independent stores throughout Texas in off-the-beaten-track towns such as Sulphur Springs and Paris. Her big break came when she was assigned the Albertson's account.

"That was a big deal for me because I had only been with the company a few years," Stout said.

Stout took advantage of the opportunity and developed some creative promotions involving the Dallas Cowboys and a Huggies Baby Derby during the halftime of the team's annual Thanksgiving Day game at Texas Stadium. Not long after that the offer came to relocate for a position at Kimberly Clark's Neena, Wis. headquarters. Although initially reluctant, she took the job and moved north in 1994.

"When I got off the plane and it was eight below zero I thought, 'What have I done?'"

Eighteen months later the opportunity arose to return to Northwest Arkansas where she spent her teenage years after her family relocated to the area from Memphis when she was 13. A few

years later the opportunity arose to become team leader at Doane Pet Care, which at the time was based in Joplin, Mo. She commuted to Joplin for three years before convincing Doane to establish an office in Northwest Arkansas. After building a local team of 12 people, Doane was sold and the local office was closed.

Out of a job and with her mother in need of health care, Stout's professional career took a back seat. After her mother passed away last year, Stout decided it was time to start her own business and settled on becoming an executive recruiter.

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