

**Today, Out My Window™** is a business started in May 2007 by Elaine Flynn of Boswell, Benton County, Indiana. Elaine is an artist and photographer who became ill in July 2006 and as a result was housebound for the better part of a year and a half. While recovering from her lengthy illness, she began taking photographs of wildlife out her window, which inspired her to overcome her physical limitations.

***"I am very thankful for what I have but maybe more thankful for discovering that I am stronger in spirit and determination than I ever thought. I have gone through much the last few years with my health problems but I have not let it taint my zest for life and beauty. I am inspired every day; each time I look 'out my window,' and I hope to share this inspiration with others. There is untold beauty in every back yard. All one has to do is see."***

This inspiration has now grown into a full-time business. Elaine specializes in greeting cards, framed prints, calendars, T's and Sweatshirts, and other gift items that showcase the various wildlife creatures she has photographed. Her website is [www.todayoutmywindow.com](http://www.todayoutmywindow.com).

***"I have studied fine art, wildlife and the art of photography since the age of 10. Now I try to use the camera the way I have always used pencil and brush."***

During her first year of business, her customers consisted of interior designers in Indiana and Illinois who retailed her cards and prints. Barry Lantz Interiors, 4725 Statesmen Dr, Indianapolis, has used Elaine's photos in homes in north Indianapolis, Carmel and the Geist area. In the spring of 2008 the design company also used several photos in the St. Margaret's Guild Decorator Show home on Pennsylvania Avenue in Indianapolis. Founded in 1907, St Margaret's Hospital Guild is a volunteer organization committed to raising funds for services and programs of *Wishard Health Services*.

Barbara J Mueller, ASID, who has a design firm in Champaign, Illinois and Naples, Florida began buying cards from Elaine for her clients as well as her personal use. Ms Mueller has been involved with Elaine in developing and expanding her card line.

She also formed relationships with local retailers in Benton County, Indiana when she developed a line of windmill products that showcased the new windmill industry in the county. Through this learning experience, she went on to contact national retailers, such as Wild Birds, Unlimited, which consists of 287 stores located in the United States and Canada who have agreed to carry her as an official vendor. This relationship will now allow her to continue to expand to other national and international retailers.

Today Out My Window™ is a business that not only wholesales and retails cards, framed prints and gift products, but is committed to wildlife conservation efforts. She is a member of the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Program, the Indiana Wildlife Federation and Ducks Unlimited. Her photos have been used by the HTC (Hometown Competitiveness Program) of Oxford, Indiana as a way to promote Benton County on various billboards throughout the county. She has submitted photos to Montana State University Butterfly and Moths of North America Program. This program documents and verifies butterfly sightings and maintains a searchable database with county by county recorded butterfly sightings in the United States and Mexico.

Elaine Flynn first contacted Heather Clark Reynolds, a business advisor with the Hoosier Heartland Small Business Development Center, in October 2008 for advice on marketing and developing her product line for additional national retailers. Heather had provided Elaine's name to a SBDC client who was looking for a photographer for her magazine; she had babysat for Elaine and her husband over 25 years ago and had read in the local newspaper about Elaine's illness and her efforts to overcome her physical disabilities through photography. Heather has helped Elaine with marketing efforts and brainstorming on various ways to market her product line.

Since October of 2008, Elaine's sales have increased and to accommodate her expanding business she has hired four retired women. This effort not only helps Elaine keep her costs down, but provides supplemental income for women on a fixed income and otherwise unemployable due to their age and lack of jobs in the area.

**“Heather has been a joy to work with. She provided a Marketing and Research Report that has a wealth of information about the local market. The most valuable information that she provided has been the Dunn and Bradstreet search for retailers who would be interested in my product. This takes the guess work out of which stores to contact and saves cost and time.”**

Today Out My Window not only has contributed jobs to the local depressed economy, employing women who otherwise would be turned away, but creates awareness for wildlife and conservation efforts that anyone with a backyard can utilize.

**“I would recommend SBDC services to any business that wants to expand. In the present economy the SBDC services are a necessity to stay ahead of competition. Just like the treasures that I see in my back yard, SBDC is a treasure right in our back yards; close to home and so easy to contact.”**

**“Both of my daughters attended Purdue University and after my youngest graduated, Purdue wasn't in the forefront of my mind. Now I understand that Purdue and the programs offered there are not just for college students. Through the SBDC program, Purdue is a lifelong asset.”**

