

□ *Editor's note: This is the one in a series of feature stories about people who have returned to their hometown of Imperial, after working in other communities.*



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

When Stephanie Way graduated from Chase County High School in December, 2003, she never planned to return to Imperial.

She enrolled in Bahners in Fremont, graduating in 2004 with a cosmetology license from the State of Nebraska. Immediately following that, she was employed by Hair Masters in LaVista for a year.

Feeling the need to have that last “summer” that most college students have, but she didn’t, Stephanie returned to Imperial in the summer of 2005, determined to stay only a few months.

Her plans were then to move to Ft. Collins, Colo., to help her recently widowed grandmother.

“I was absolutely not going to stay,” she said of Imperial. However, she changed her mind when older sister, Kim Wiest of Imperial, had son Cole.

Stephanie became “really close” to Cole, and spent a lot of time with him.

“I was the only one of the family living away,” Stephanie said. “Scott and Becky (brother and sister) got to see him grow up and be there. I wanted to be here and see him more than maybe once a month.”

Stephanie’s parents, Bruce and Dianne Way, owned the little building next to their Northside Motel. They were planning to remodel it and add a tanning booth.

The cosmetologist thought it would be nice to add a sink and one small station, so that she didn’t have to do “kitchen sink hair.”

That was the beginning of Platinum Salon, Stephanie’s business.

“It kind of kept going and going,” she said of establishing it and remaining in Imperial.

She’s glad she did it. Her salon and family are the main reasons she’s living in Imperial, but she also loves the outdoors, hunting, fishing and spending summers at Enders Reservoir. The outdoor opportunities are what makes Imperial unique, she believes.

There are no challenges and no issues to being a 24-year old single woman in town, Stephanie said. “I’m not a person who worries about what other people think.”

But, she said she originally heard people question her hair styling techniques, which involve innovative cuts and bold colors. She cuts, colors and perms male and female adults and children.

“Messing with people keeps me entertained,” she laughed.

Spending lots of time with Cole and niece Kylee is also entertaining.

If she would try to sell Imperial to friends who didn’t grow up here, Stephanie said the main selling point is “because I’m here!”

