

# Covering all the bases: New flooring business earns kudos from River Bend Growth Association

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ALTON - After being in business for less than two years, Direct Floors has been awarded the River Bend Growth Association's Business of the Month for March.

Married couple Kevin and Sara Neely opened their store at 4131 Alby St. in August 2007. Sara Neely said that network support and community involvement have been instrumental in Direct Floor's success.

"I can't say enough about the (RBGA)," she said. "It is amazing. This community was so welcoming and so supportive. This organization is awesome."

For the couple, social networking is a priority, and Sara Neely is actively involved with her community, serving on one of the RBGA's committees. Sponsorship and fund-raising also is close to their hearts.

"We sponsored Floor Autism Now! last fall," Neely said. "We partnered with Bethalto Mayor Steve Bryant with his Autism Speaks fund-raiser, and we rose over \$4,000 through this store. We were very proud to be involved."

Providing high-quality flooring, carpet and tile with full-service installation by experienced technicians, Direct Floors strives to make every customer a loyal one.

"We have a great staff and a great crew that are so helpful and really have a lot to offer," Neely said.

Knowing how hectic daily schedules can be, Neely said her company is ready and willing to work with its customers and go that extra mile.

"I have always been in sales and marketing, and I decided I wanted to make this a lot more fun with in-home design consultations," she said. "We have design books here. I will come out to the house and work with the customer. Often, people know what they want but just are not sure how to get there. We pride ourselves on being able to help them out as much as we can.

"We try to give our customers exactly what they are looking for. We want to meet all of their expectations and create something they will be happy with, and still be happy with one or two years from now."

People often are surprised at Direct Floors' level of service and variety of options.

"Many people are surprised to find that we do custom kitchen back-splashes and specialize in custom tile," Neely said.

The Neely family knows the importance of service firsthand. With a 4-year-old daughter and 22-month-old son, forming a company together was an ambitious undertaking.

"We started the business when Henry was only four months old," Neely said. "My husband has been in flooring for years. He had always wanted to go out on his own, so this is really Kevin's thing.

"I said, 'let's just do it while the kids are still young.'"

While maintaining a professional atmosphere, Direct Floors is family-friendly and laid-back so customers can feel at home.

"We normally have a playroom here," Neely said. "Our kids use it a lot. They call it their office. After the work in the showroom is finished, we will have our playroom back."

A new era for the company will begin this spring with a second location in Edwardsville.

"We are not just excited, we are super-excited (about the new store)," Neely said. "It is actively in the works, and we are shooting to open in two to three months."

Although they may be spinning many plates right now, Kevin and Sara show no signs of slowing down. Sara has started the Direct Floors blog at [directfloors.blogspot.com](http://directfloors.blogspot.com), plans are under way to renovate the current Web site, and the showroom is on track to be finished - just in time for the next big project.

"I (want) everything to be perfect," Sara Neely writes on the blog site. "We have fun, my store looks good, and my customers are happy.

"That is plenty perfect enough for me."

Direct Floors offer free in-home consultations and evening and Sunday hours by appointment. For information, call (618) 463-1300 or visit the Web site at [www.yourdirectfloors.com](http://www.yourdirectfloors.com).