

WHO OWNS COLORADO: DOWNTURN OR NOT, HIGHLAND STILL HOT

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[WOMEN IN BUSINESS ISSUE]

## JOURNEY OF FAITH

Athena Award winner Sister Alicia Cuaron gave up a successful business career and now guides others toward the American dream.

ATHENA FINALISTS PROFILED ON P.24

*"I say to women who have a lack of expertise, 'Come along with me, I can help you.' Look, I started from scratch."*

### ALSO

EXECUTIVE EDGE:  
VERIZON WIRELESS'  
MELANIE BRAIDICH

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IN TV, FILM

TOP 100  
WOMAN-OWNED  
COMPANIES

# [small biz] COLORADO COOL STUFF

BY ERIC PETERSON



## BEYOND A PEANUT FLASHCARDS

A frightening incident in 2004 led Dina Clifford to start her company. As the mother of two children with severe peanut allergies, her young son's "accidental bite" of a peanut-butter sandwich led to a doctor's visit and a realization for Clifford and her husband: "We were completely ignorant of peanut allergies." So Clifford came up with Beyond a Peanut Flashcards, a set of 36 cards detailing which foods are safe and which might have "hidden" peanuts or peanut dust from cross-contamination. Unexpected places where peanuts pop up, she added, include cosmetics and Mexican food. "Food allergies are on the rise," Clifford said. "And I can't expect people to read what I read." \$13.99 retail.

Made by Mind Flight LLC, Centennial, [www.beyondapeanut.com](http://www.beyondapeanut.com).

Also available at Tattered Cover stores in Colorado and Amazon.com.

## GOODBELLY

The latest natural-foods company by Steve Demos — founder of soy-milk titan WhiteWave — NextFoods emerged from a trip Demos took in 2004 "re-tracing old steps" of a hitchhiking journey he took in the 1970s before starting WhiteWave.

"There is an affinity in my life to traveling in India and then starting companies," Demos said. "We went on a three-week walk into the Himalayas. Afterwards, I had a clear vision of what I wanted to do."

NextFoods' GoodBelly fruit drink is a "nutraceutical" that is wheat-, dairy-, and soy-free. Available in three varieties — Peach Mango, Blueberry Acai and Strawberry Rosehips — GoodBelly is rich in a probiotic known as Lp299v that promotes healthy digestion and immunity.

\$4.49 per four-pack retail.

Made by NextFoods LLC, Boulder, [www.verb-goodbelly.com](http://www.verb-goodbelly.com).



"I didn't enjoy the pharmacies, but I really liked eye care," Banks said of the move. "It's a tight little industry, very personable, good ethics. In the chain pharmacies, they're basically selling real estate."

It took a few years to "bootstrap" the company, but Natural Ophthalmics' eight products — including eye drops specifically for men and women, allergy desensitization and cataracts — are now available through 400 doctors as sales grew 40 percent in 2007. "Our homeopathic eye drops stimulate the body to do what it

should be doing," Banks said. "Other products are basically artificial tears. They're not therapeutic drops — they're comfort drops." \$12.78 suggested retail.

Made by Natural Ophthalmics Inc., Frisco, (877) 220-9710, [www.naturaleye-drops.com](http://www.naturaleye-drops.com).



## NATURAL OPHTHALMICS EYE DROPS

President Brian Banks started Natural Ophthalmics in 2001 after taking another homeopathic company to the mass market from a Breckenridge office.

## MOUNTAIN RINGS

Since relocating from Texas in 1989 — after meeting his wife, Cindy, on an airplane trip — John Varner has had three locations for his Morning Star Jewelers in Evergreen.

"We've gotten a little bigger each time," said Varner, who has been in the jewelry business for 27 years.

His latest creation is the Mountain Ring, a wearable work of custom art in platinum, gold or silver. Unfolding around the ring, Varner's subject is the Collegiate Peaks Mountain Range, based on a snapshot showcasing the range's eight 14ers and drop-dead natural beauty. A portion of the proceeds go to the Mountain Resource Center, a Conifer-based health and human services nonprofit. \$495 and up.

Made by Morning Star Jewelers, 3877 Evergreen Parkway, Evergreen, (303) 674-3505.

