

An executive by accident

■ **Writers For Hire founder was surprised by her own success**

By **KIM HOGSTROM**
CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

When Wintress Odom decided to be a writer, she didn't know she was going to be a small business owner, too. In fact, it didn't occur to her that she'd started a business until she ended up with a payroll, an office manager and an executive suite.

"People think that I just decided to start a writing business," Odom says. "But to tell you the truth, I didn't really mean to. The Writers for Hire just sort of happened."

How do you accidentally start a business?

Odom started writing in 2001, after graduating from Rice University. Like a lot of college graduates, she didn't really know what she was going to do. But she did have a passion, and that passion was writing.

Odom put up a website: thewritersforhire.com, and asked her then-boyfriend (now husband) Sean to help with the marketing. He had just started working in search engine optimization, the art of getting websites to show up in Google results. On her website, Odom offered copywriting, ghostwriting, family histories, technical writing, journalism, editing and proofreading.

"I thought I'd get a few jobs and help pay the bills, but all of a sudden, I ended up with too much work," Odom said.



KEEP IT LOCAL: Wintress Odom, the founder of Writers for Hire, shares some work with her husband, Sean Odom. From left are Sean, Kellum and Wintress. Evelyn, the baby, is in front.

"When I told one client that he'd have to wait two months to get his next newsletter, he found another writer. I didn't care for that, so I had to start hiring people."

Next thing she knew, she had incorporated and she was helping other writers keep their full-time writing dreams alive.

Odom says The Writers For Hire now fills a unique niche. For customers, the company provides the benefits of a senior editor, a close client-writer relationship and a variety of specialties under one roof. For her Houston-based writers, the company offers the hard-to-find opportunity for full-time, salaried writing positions.

All writers are hired in Katy and the surrounding areas. "I've been very adamant about that," says Odom. "There are so many good writers here. And we work well

as a local team - I think that's how the customers get the best service. I get resumes all the time, from Kentucky or New York or wherever, but I only hire local writers."

Odom recently moved to Katy from Houston with her husband and two children, Kellum and Evelyn.

Her husband, who helped The Writers For Hire gain its Internet exposure almost a decade ago, is still a full-time Internet marketer and owns seopt.com. The husband-and-wife team often shares clients.

"I never thought that a website we tossed up right out of college would lead to a full-time job for me, or for others," says Odom. "It's a ton of work, especially with two kids. But I love it, my employees love it, and my clients keep coming back, year after year. What more could you ask?"

WINTRESS ODOM

Lives: Katy

Occupation: Founder, owner of The Writers For Hire

Fast Fact: She meant to use her writing as an income supplement. But she got so much work she had to hire a team of writers from the Katy area.

Quote: "I thought I'd get a few jobs and help pay the bills, but all of a sudden, I ended up with too much work. When I told one client that he'd have to wait two months to get his next newsletter, he found another writer. I didn't care for that, so I had to start hiring people."

Volunteer Houston features a variety of local volunteer opportunities in the community.

Guide dogs

Rear a puppy for an organization that assigns guide dogs to visually impaired people. In-depth instruction will equip you to care for and train a puppy that will eventually become a companion to someone in need of the dog's services. This responsible assignment calls for mature volunteers willing to integrate the dog thoroughly into their family lives and daily routines. The duration of commitment varies but is typically in the range of 12-18 months.



Fun with seniors

Get out and about with residents of a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center in Katy. The staff are looking for volunteers who would enjoy accompanying a group of these seniors on outings

WANT TO HELP?

For more information on the following volunteer opportunities, please call Volunteer Houston 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday at 713-965-0031.

Additional opportunities: www.volunteerhouston.org

to places such as parks, museums, restaurants and malls. Outings typically take place on weekdays and last one or two hours. Your involvement can be on a regular or an occasional basis. Transportation is provided.

Staff a thrift shop

Take care of business as a volunteer at a popular thrift shop in Katy. Taking on a weekly morning or afternoon shift on weekdays or Saturdays, you can assist customers with their selections and help sort, price, display, and sell donated merchandise. Some assignments are open to youth volunteers. Proceeds from the shop's sales directly support a local church coalition's broad array of services to the needy.

WHERE TO FIND US

Ultimate Woodlands

P.O. Box 4260, Suite 445
Houston, TX 77210
Telephone: 713-362-7932
neighborhoods@chron.com
Fax: 713-362-7552

News editor

Alan Fossler
713-362-6229
alan.fossler@chron.com

Sports editor

Russ Goodall
713-362-3567
russ.goodall@chron.com

Advertising Manager

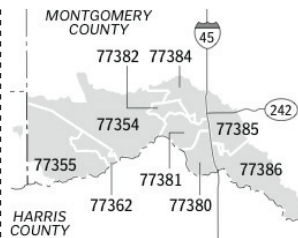
Kris Balmanno
713-362-6540
kris.balmanno@chron.com

Neighborhood News manager

Howard Decker
713-362-7932
howard.decker@chron.com

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To subscribe, call 713-362-7211 or 800-362-7211.



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