

# GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

MONTANA'S NEWSPAPER

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### Sisterhood of the traveling Red Ants Pants

Last week, some friends and I were walking the streets of White Sulphur Springs during the annual Christmas stroll when I came across my dream rig — a vintage Airstream trailer — parked along a side street.

The shiny silver trailer was hooked up to a red truck. A festive Christmas wreath hung just below the Montana license plate.

"These people are going somewhere," I thought to myself, excited for them. There's nothing I love more than a good road trip.

Upon closer examination, I discovered a line of giant red ants dotted the smooth body of the Airstream. The ant decals



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led to signs on each side of the trailer. "Red Ants Pants," they read. "Workwear for Women."

I first saw the Red Ants Pants storefront several years back as I drove through White Sulphur Springs on my way to train sled dogs up in the Little Belt Mountains.

I've been wondering what goes on there for awhile now; finally, this was my chance to

stop in for a visit.

"My friend, Emily, and my dog, Millie, and I are all hitting the road tomorrow," Sarah Calhoun, 29, the founder and owner of Red Ants Pants explained as she handed me a cup of hot, spiced wine. Her business was just one of many hosting open houses for the Christmas stroll — the store-room was packed with Red Ants friends and fans. "We're going on tour, selling our pants. This week we're just doing a shakedown with the Airstream — we're going to Missoula and Columbia Falls and Whitefish."

Sarah has worked on trail crews and wildfire recovery teams; she has been a log peel-

er, an Outward Bound instructor, a ski trail groomer. She decided to make work pants for women because she was sick and tired of wearing ill-fitting trousers constructed for men's bodies, not women's curves.

"I kept complaining about it and even wrote letters to workwear companies, telling them they ought to make pants that fit women too," Sarah explained.

"They told me that if I felt so strongly about it, I should just make them myself. So I thought, maybe I will ... maybe I'll make my own pants."

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KAREN LAND PHOTO  
Sarah Calhoun, left, founder of Red Ants Pants, with Millie, center, and Emily Coulter, just before hitting the road to sell pants.

## Land: Red Ants pants hit the road

FROM 1

Sarah meant business when she took on the challenge to create pants for every woman. Red Ants Pants come in 70 different sizes so every customer — women and men — can find that perfect fit.

"It made sense to use the culture of the brand to sell pants," Sarah said. "People really do like to know the owner. They like knowing who made their pants. This is the only place in the world you can find them — they like that authenticity."

Sarah says most of her business, 70 to 80 percent is internet sales. Her Web site — [www.redantpants.com](http://www.redantpants.com) — is informative and fun. She also attends trade shows.

White Sulphur Springs' rancher John Hanson of Bar Z Riverside Ranch is sponsoring her exhibit at the National Cattle-men's Beef Association Convention and Trade Show from Jan.

28-31 in Phoenix.

Sarah's longtime friend, Emily Coulter, 27, is a willing and enthusiastic Red Ants Pants roadie.

"We were just sitting around, talking, drinking some beers, and we got this idea in our heads, 'Wouldn't it be so great if we could go on the road selling pants?'" Emily explained.

"Yeah, we could have Tupperware-style parties in women's homes," Sarah added. "But sell work pants instead."

And an idea was born.

Emily is a volunteer for the upcoming national road tour.

"I get free pants for the rest of my life," she said, beaming, obviously quite happy with the deal.

Big Sky Brewery of Missoula also recently signed on as a supporter of Red Ants Pants.

"Our pants parties are a good time," Sarah said. "The host supplies the food and friends and gets a gift certificate and T-shirt in return. We supply an enter-

taining slide show of our history and customer photos and bring lots of pants to try on. And Big Sky Brewery supplies the Moose Drool beer. It's pretty cool."

Red Ants Pants will be doing several tours of Montana and will also be doing parties across the Southwest; in the Portland, Ore., and Seattle; and across the Rocky Mountain region from now through spring 2009. Eventually, they hope to hit every state.

"We'll take our pants anywhere and everywhere," Sarah said. "I like meeting my customers in person."

**Editor's note:** Karen Land travels frequently to out-of-the-way places in Montana, and she usually bumps into a pretty good story along the way. Land's People and Places is a new column by that will appear monthly in the Tribune Outdoors section.