



Photo: Amy Dalrymple

## Faces of the Boom: Louisiana living, Bakken business for telecommuting graphic designer

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By: **Amy Dalrymple, Forum News Service**

**WILLISTON, N.D.** – When Tiffany Smith made the decision to leave North Dakota and return to Louisiana, she didn't want to leave her job.

The graphic designer joked with her boss that she could still work for the Williston business from afar.

Due to the city's workforce shortage, Smith's idea to work from her home office in Louisiana wasn't as crazy as she thought.

Since last May, she's continued doing graphic design work for clients of DAWA Solutions Group, hooked into the office's phone system and occasionally traveling to North Dakota for major events.

"It's practically like I'm in the office," said Smith, 29. "I feel like I'm still there."

Business owner Jeff Zarling said he's had difficulty recruiting and retaining employees, in part because of Williston's lack of affordable housing and child care.

For Smith and her husband, Ben, the main reason they decided to return to Louisiana after living in Williston for 2½ years was to be near friends and family. Smith's brother was expecting his first baby, and several friends and family had asked Smith to be in their upcoming weddings.

"We made the decision that we wanted to be back down here for all of those things," Smith said. "I didn't want to miss my niece growing up."

The couple had an affordable apartment in Williston because Ben Smith worked for Williams County, which owns housing in order to retain employees. Housing wasn't the main factor in their decision to leave, but it did play a role.

"We were ready to buy a home," Smith said. "We could not really afford the houses that were being built in Williston."

The couple built a home in Madisonville, La., about 45 minutes from New Orleans.

But with her job in Williston, Smith is able to maintain close ties to North Dakota, where she also has family. Smith was born in Minot and spent some of her high school years in Grand Forks while her father served in the Air Force.

"I get the best of both worlds," she said.

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Original Post

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