

DesMoinesRegister.com

The Des Moines Register

Published September 27, 2006

## Urbandale shoe store puts helpful spring in your step

**Omaha entrepreneur brings relief to Des Moines' aching feet with new high-tech, alternative Z-COIL footwear**

By JOANNE BOECKMAN  
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

In June 2003, Dave Frank of Omaha was at the College Baseball World Series when he noticed players and fans wearing shoes with a spring attached under the heels of the soles.

Frank, a runner who has arthritis in his knee and degenerative spinal pain, soon ordered a pair of the shoes, called Z-Coil, for himself.

Frank, 58, is a former U. S. Naval officer and entrepreneur. He was so impressed with the Z-Coil shoes that by August 2003, he and his two sisters - they called themselves "Two Sole Sisters and One Old Heel" - opened a Z-Coil Pain Relief Footwear shoe store in Omaha. About nine months ago they opened another Z-Coil store in a 3,600-square-foot space at 104th Street and Hickman Road in Urbandale. It's the only one in Iowa.

Z-Coil, whose corporate headquarters is in Arizona, was founded 11 years ago by Al Gallegos, who had back pain, heel spurs and plantar fasciitis and was looking to an alternative to conventional footwear.

Frank answered these questions about Z-Coil.

### Q. Explain what Z-Coil shoes are.

**A.** All Z-Coil shoes have three features the same. The first is a rigid orthotic that never breaks down in the arch. It's great for foot pain caused by plantar fasciitis (pain across the bottom of the foot) and heel spurs. It supports the arch.

The second is a metatarsal cushioning in the front of the shoe.

The third thing is the coil. It absorbs impact and reduces it by 50 percent. The best running shoes absorb only 2 to 3 percent of impact. The average shoe absorbs 1 percent.

### Q. What is the purpose of this design?

**A.** It reduces the pressure of standing, walking and running. The normal impact to the body is five times the body weight if running and two to three times the body weight if walking. The coil returns 40 to 50 percent of the impact to the body as energy. People on concrete surfaces get energy back so they're not as tired at the end of the day.

It provides relief for pressure on the lower back. It also reduces stress on the body and can help knee, hip and chronic skeletal pain. You're not putting impact on the knees and joints, and it's a relief for the lower back.

### Q. This looks like a high-heeled shoe with a coil instead of a heel. Is it?

**A.** A lot of people view this as a high heel, but it's not. If you look at the shoe, it's really a flat surface.

### Q. What styles do you have?

**A.** We have 18 styles: sandals, clogs, running shoes, walking shoes, dress shoes, hiking boots and steel-toed boots. The coils are enclosed in the heels of the boots for safety reasons. The cover captures some of the energy, so it doesn't return as much to the body. The company introduces a new model every quarter.

We're one of the dealers that stocks all models and sizes. There are 200 distributors in the country.

### Q. What do they cost?

**A.** About \$180 for the sandals to \$270 for the steel-toes boots. Most of the shoes are under \$200.



**GARY FANDEL/REGISTER PHOTOS**

Pain Relief Footwear offers a variety of shoes, including the running shoe, above, and the casual shoe, below.

### Z-Coil

**Address:** 10445 Hickman Road, Urbandale

**Phone:** 334-7240

**Web:** www.zcoil.com

**Product:** pain relief footwear

**Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10

am.-4 p.m. Friday-Saturday

**Owner:** Dave Frank of Omaha

**Urbandale managers:** John Baker and Linda Stougaard

That seems expensive but remember they have the metatarsal cushioning, coil and orthotic in them. We get a lot of cases of people having tried everything else before they come in here.

The shoes last a lot longer than traditional shoes. It's a rigid orthotic, so it will not break down. If you wear out the rubber on the coil, we can replace the coil and put in all new insoles.

**Q. Who wears them?**

**A.** Our No. 1 clientele are nurses. Second are hairdressers. Next are retailers - people who work on concrete in the big stores.

**Q. How do you fit them?**

**A.** About 10 percent of people can wear them right out of the box, but 90 percent need to have adjustments. We can customize the arch, the width, the coil settings. We've customized them for broken foot bones and bunions.

We have customers who over pronate (turn their feet in) or who have over supination (turning their feet out) and we can correct that by making adjustments to realign the skeletal frame.

The fitting process requires one full week of training, and you have to pass an exam. If you don't set the product right, it will cause more harm than help.

**Q. What do you hear people say about walking on them for the first time?**

**A.** It takes about five to 10 minutes for most people to get used to them. Some people come in to get fitted and wear them out of the store.

**Q. What is your personal experience with them?**

**A.** When I ordered that first pair of shoes, I started running and my back pain went away. I was skeptical of them at first, but others have told me about the same thing - their knee, hip or neck pain, plantar fasciitis went away.

**Q. How is the Urbandale store doing?**

**A.** In the last month, it's been outselling the Omaha store. That store was No. 1 in Z-Coil by the end of 2004, outselling the top stores in Phoenix and Las Vegas. I hope to take this one to No. 1.  
test

■ **Click here to go back to article**

Copyright © 2005, The Des Moines Register.

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated 1/3/2003).