By Lauren Smith-Kuckkahn

People working to lose an extra 10 pounds, or trying to kick unhealthy habits like smoking, may be happy to hear that a new service is available in the area that can help with everything from curbing unwanted behaviors to enhancing positive ones.

The therapist is in town—the hypnotherapist, that is.

Venango, Neb. farm-owner Martin Bremmer, 43, opened the region's first hypnotherapy practice last month.

Owner and practitioner of Inner Life Hypnotherapy, Bremmer said that his transition from farming to hypnotherapy happened by degrees.

Married for nearly 20 years and a father of three, Bremmer and his mystery novelist wife, Patti, have operated a successful dog kennel during those 20 years.

"Hypnotherapy is a natural stepping stone in my life path, because I like to help people; it's an innate part of my character," Bremmer said. "I [also] have a big fondness for medical stuff. I'm a science person."

While in college, Bremmer worked for a cancer research lab in Denver, where he learned lab skills and was able to work in a scientific field. Later, he used his lab and medical skills while working in his own lab in the dog kennel.

He pursued his medical interests further when he took certification courses through Mid-Plains Community College in 2007 to become a nurse's aid and medication aid.

Bremmer went to Berkeley, Calif. to study at the ISHI School of Hypnosis, one of the top hypnosis schools, with an international reputation for excellence.

Currently certified by the National Guild of Hypnotists, Bremmer expects to become board-certified next year.

While the fields of science and hypnosis may seem to be irrelevant to each other at first glance, there is a lot of scientific research behind hypnosis now, Bremmer said.

Bremmer explained that hypnotherapy is an exercise in 'positive programming,' a therapist-led state of deep relaxation during which the therapist and patient work on deep-rooted issues of the patient's choosing. The hypnotherapist assists a person in delving into his or her inner consciousness to make desired mental and behavioral changes.

"The human mind is one of the most powerful things in the universe, but one of the least understood mechanisms on our planet," Bremmer said.

Just as placebo studies have shown compelling evidence of a powerful mind and body connection, studies of hypnosis have shown that the mind, when properly persuaded, can be the key to wellness and pain management, he explained.

"There's really profound, documented evidence about the effects of hypnotizing people," Bremmer said. "The uses for hypnosis are countless because of the mind's ability to create a problem where problems didn't exist before."

Hypnotherapy can be used to address weight loss, pain relief and addictive behaviors such as smoking, he said. It can also be used to enhance skills like track, golf and studying.

Hypnotherapy has a long history of development beginning in ancient Greece, and has been experimented with by notable figures such as Sigmund Freud. Charles and William Mayo, founders of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., pioneered using hypnosis as a pain management technique on patients undergoing surgery.

Today thousands of doctors and dentists use hypnosis frequently in their practices, Bremmer said.

Despite the scientific basis of hypnotherapy, there are many people still skeptical of hypnosis

as a means of therapy. Bremmer said that much of this skepticism came from two things—the way that hypnosis is portrayed in movies and on television, and improper teaching of hypnosis methods to the practitioners.

In the past, hypnosis was poorly understood. Many people were being taught ineffective methods, which led to ineffective practice, he said.

Hypnotism in entertainment also fuels skepticism about the validity of hypnosis as a tool in medicine. Bremmer explained that stage hypnotists demonstrate the extremes of hypnosis for entertainment, while a hypnotherapist uses hypnosis for genuine, restorative therapy and pain management.

Bremmer said that hypnosis does not control people or coerce them to do things against their will. Instead, hypnosis creates an environment in which clients can recalibrate their subconscious thinking to eliminate problems and issues, he said.

“The hypnosis client is always in control of what they want to believe,” he said.

Each person responds to hypnosis differently, and the number of sessions required to reach a goal depends on the abilities and mind-state of each client, he explained.

A session typically lasts 60 to 75 minutes, during which Bremmer uses a combination of techniques to guide his client into a deep state of relaxation and focus. Once the client is in hypnosis, Bremmer works with him or her on goals specified at the beginning of the session.

According to Bremmer, the client is aware of everything that happens during the session, and remembers the entire session afterwards.

Bremmer is very flexible about how he sees his clients. He is available by appointment and can work with individuals or groups. He offers on-site sessions in offices, schools and churches,

He can work with clients in Omaha, Lincoln, North Platte, Imperial and Ogallala, Neb. Bremmer said he also takes clients in Colorado in Denver, Fort Collins and Holyoke. In each of these towns, he rents rooms from existing businesses for his practice.

“In a nutshell, the client and myself make a determination of the best location to have a session. Since everyone has such a busy schedule, it is nice to have the flexibility of locations and time of day for subsequent sessions,” he said.

For more information about Inner Life Hypnotherapy, visit www.innerlifehypnotherapy.com.