

Let the celebration begin

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Business centers and development service reach landmark anniversaries

—By Debra Mayeux—

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FARMINGTON — Thousands of jobs were created in San Juan County over a course of the 20-year history of San Juan Economic Development Service and the Small Business Development Center of New Mexico.

These organizations are joining with the Quality Center for Business and Enterprise Center at San Juan College in a celebratory and landmark year. Those two centers are celebrating 10 years of service to the community in 2009.

The year-long party kicked off Jan. 7 at the Quality Center for Business.

"We're really excited about being here today, launching a number of celebratory events," said Jasper Welch, director of the San Juan College Enterprise Center. "It's exciting when you think about the economic challenges today, we put this (center) together as a community to help during times like this."

The concept of a business center at San Juan College came about in 1988, when then Farmington Mayor Tom Taylor wanted to start a business incubator center. At the same time then college president Jim Henderson wanted to start a quality center of business.

In 1989, the San Juan Economic Development Service opened its doors with a focus on providing companies with expansion services or recruiting new businesses to the community. The businesses being served were those that either export goods or services out of the area and bring new dollars into San Juan County, said Margaret McDaniel, executive director of San Juan Economic Development Services.

The Small Business Center of New Mexico also opened in 1989. It has a satellite office in the Quality Center for Business. That office assists small businesses with all types of needs.

"People having economic issues, this is a good time to come to us," said Carmen Martinez, director. The center conducts workshops and works one-on-one with individuals.

The many business services in the county came together under one roof, when Henderson managed to secure the funds in 1999, for the Quality Center for business.

"I had to come up with a million and a half to start the incubator, and Jim came up with the bucks for the Quality Center of Business," Taylor said. "We were creating new entrepreneurs and supporting business."

Those practices continue on a daily basis with 13 business currently involved in the incubator program and hundreds of businesses receiving daily support from the Quality Center for Business. This building north of San Juan College on College Boulevard is the home to the Enterprise Center, San Juan Economic Development Service, Small Business Development Center, Business and Industry Training Center and Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments.

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