

Economic Focus



GRAND JUNCTION economic PARTNERSHIP

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A monthly update of economic development issues provided by the Grand Junction Economic Partnership

GJMakerspace puts technology and tools into the hands of small business

By Penny Stine
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Grand Junction doesn't have a reputation for being on the cutting edge of anything, unless a person counts being in the center of one of the best places for outdoor lovers to live as a cutting edge.

One thing that entities in the area have gotten pretty good at doing, however, is forming partnerships that help everybody get where they want to go. The Grand Junction Economic Partnership's support of the Business Incubator Center (BIC) and GJMakerspace, which has a home at the incubator, exemplifies the collaboration that encourages strong economic development in the community.

"We're working on several joint projects together," said Jon Maraschin, executive director at BIC, which offers great programs, classes and support for small companies. Many of the prospects courted by GJEP are eager to take advantage of the award-winning expertise and programs offered at the incubator, especially when they see the makerspace.

For those who are unfamiliar with the concept, a makerspace is an open workshop where engineers and designers or anyone with an idea or a desire to make a better mousetrap can come and work together. Instead of hammers and saws, however, a makerspace usually features tools like 3D printers or laser cutters. Some members may love doing CAD (computer-aided design), while others may love robotics or coding. Unlike the old 20th Century workshops in which a guy worked by himself out in the garage, a huge part of the draw of a good makerspace is the community, and the opportunity to collaborate, help and figure things out together.

"If we bring in a company with a bunch of engineers, they're going to work on projects outside of the company," Maraschin said. "They'll want to interact with other makers



PENNY STINE/Sentinel Special Sections

Although this formlabs FORM 2 3D printer is small enough to fit on a desktop, it comes with a large price tag. It's also available for use by any member of GJMakerspace, which is a collaborative forum at the Grand Junction Business Incubator Center that connects people with the tools and the community to create products, parts and pieces.

and innovators."

That was true for Nick Tinney, who is an electrical engineer by degree, but who has also done work in mechanical and computer engineering. His job kept him from getting as involved in the makerspace community as he wanted to be, so when he was laid off, he decided to start his own engineering firm, iC3 Engineering, and volunteer at the makerspace, where he is now serving as the director.

"We encourage people to come in and play with things," Tinney said. Those who join

GJMakerspace can be hobbyists who simply want work on expensive equipment that they'd never be able to afford, or small business owners who are trying to develop a better way of making a product.

"We love napkin sketches," Tinney said. "That's how designs start."

The newest tool available at GJMakerspace is the Formlabs Form2 SLA Resin 3D printer, which normally sells for several thousand dollars. The printer creates accurate large, solid parts with intricate details that have the look of injection molding.

Right now, Tinney is working to familiarize himself with all facets of the machine's operation and capabilities, and he's eager to share that information with other makerspace members.

Members who join and work during operational hours pay \$25 per month. For \$50 per month, members can have an unlimited membership, which allows them to come and work on designs 24/7. Membership is open to anyone, and yes, small businesses can come in and use the area like it's their own design center. They may also be able to make connections with the right freelancers who have the technical skills to create a new part, a new process or a new product.

"We're doing a major expansion of makerspace that will include project space," Maraschin said. "Not to compete, but to make tools available to those who need them and to keep them from needing to buy expensive equipment."

While collaboration is often a key element to a good makerspace community, Tinney also hopes to introduce a closed IP night, at which designers can come in and work on pre-patent products without worrying about protecting their intellectual property.

For more information or a tour and demonstration of some of the equipment available to members, visit Nick Tinney at GJMakerspace.org, at the Business Incubator Center or call him at 243-5242.

GJEP INVESTOR SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Brian Davidson, President
St. Mary's Hospital & Regional
Medical Center
stmrygj.org



St. Mary's Medical Center offers the highest quality medical services in the region. We are the oldest and largest Medical Center in a 250-mile radius and offer a full range of medical and surgical services. This includes the most advanced Cancer Research Center for which we are nationally acclaimed. We also offer the most advanced Women and Children Services, Orthopedics, a Certified Stroke Center, Cardiology, CareFlight and much more. We are the largest investor in

medical infrastructure in the region employing over 2,000 associates, and the largest payroll contributor in Mesa County. We offer 346 licensed beds, the highest Trauma Care and the largest and most experienced medical staff.



Dr. Brian Davidson,
President
St. Mary's Hospital
& Regional Medical
Center

How long have you been doing business in the Grand Valley region and what brought you here in the first place?

St. Mary's was founded in 1986. That makes us 120 years old. We were founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth as a mission outreach to impoverished communities. We are still a part of SCL Health and governed by a local Board of Directors.

What is your favorite part about living and working in the Grand Valley?

I am a Colorado native so my family and I enjoy everything about the outdoors and the healthy lifestyle of our state. My wife Amy and I could not think of a better place to raise our two boys than the Grand Valley.

Why is Colorado's Grand Valley a good place for your business?

The collaborative nature of the Grand Valley has resulted in one of the finest healthcare ethos imaginable for a town our size. We consistently refer to the extraordinary level of care as part of our economic development outreach, and we are easily able to attract and retain top level medical staff because of our lifestyle here.

Why does your company choose to invest in GJEP?

Economic diversity is the lifeblood of any community. Regardless of how large or small your business, we all count on the people that live and work here to sustain us. GJEP is the foremost entity in responding and cultivating new entities to live here, work here and bring their business here. That's worth investing in.