

## Business Plus helped Solo Cup, Chobani, Clif Bar and more come to the Magic Valley. Now they're looking to the future.

COLIN TIERNAN  
ctiernan@magicvalley.com  
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TWIN FALLS — As the Magic Valley has grown over the last 30 years, one group has quietly worked to attract new business to the area.

The group, Business Plus, is funded by Magic Valley businesses. Now, in its fourth decade, Business Plus committee members and board members are looking to the future, and hope to be able to pass the torch to the next generation.

The group discussed its history and future plans over breakfast Wednesday at the First Federal Corporate Office.

“What happens next to this group?” College of Southern Idaho President Jeff Fox said. “You have all these wise people and all this experience ... This group of people will now move forward with the younger people coming in.”

Business Plus is an advocate for economic development in the Magic Valley. The group, which began more than 30 years ago, often entices business to the region by offering grants, and also works to spread the word about the Magic Valley’s business-friendly environment.

Local businesses, from Mr. Gas to Chobani, fund Business Plus. It might seem odd that local businesses would pay to bring in potential competitors, but Business Plus preaches that business begets more



Business Plus Executive Director Rebecca Wildman talks about the group’s history Wednesday at the First Federal Corporate Office in Twin Falls. Business Plus uses funding from local businesses to recruit and incentivize companies to come to the Magic Valley.

business; job growth helps everyone.

When local companies contribute to the Magic Valley’s economic expansion, they’re really helping themselves, Executive Director Rebecca Wildman said.

Today, funding Southern Idaho Economic Development is one of Business Plus’ main goals. SIED, which also receives funding from many Magic Valley governments and the College of Southern Idaho, focuses on attracting new workers. With unemployment below 3%, finding labor is a challenge and a potential obstacle to growth.

Wildman talked about some of the major businesses that Business Plus helped recruit to the Magic Valley during the last 30 years.

Business Plus’ first success was Norco Window, which came to Twin Falls back in 1987. The group spent \$500,000 recruiting the company. Other major Business Plus investments include \$528,000 in 2001 to recruit Dell, the computer giant, and \$150,000 to bring in Chobani, which now employs more than 1,000 people.

A flurry of businesses have established Magic Valley operations in recent years. In addition to Chobani, Clif Bar, Dow Chemical, Fabri-Kal, McCain Foods and Glanbia are a few of the major new arrivals.

Wildman said that the investments have more than paid for themselves by adding jobs and growing the Magic Valley economy as a whole.

Going forward, Wildman would like to see Business Plus gain more Legacy Leaders, a new category for individual investors.

Jan Rogers served as Southern Idaho Economic Development’s Executive Director for over a decade. She said that there isn’t a group like Business Plus anywhere in the state.

“It really is a special organization,” Rogers said.

Maxine Bell, who served in the Idaho House of Representative for three decades, agreed.

“For the last two governors that I’ve had the pleasure to work with, you have been the poster child,” Bell said.

### Business Plus Successes: Business Plus has helped recruit a number of businesses to the Magic Valley over the past 30 years, including those listed below.

Norco Windows	CSI (Workforce)	Glanbia	WEL Companies	Clif Bar
Solo Cup	WOW Logistics	Brewster Cheese	C3	WillTran
Seastrom Manufacturing	Gossner Foods	DOT Foods	Calva	Dow Chemical
Watco Companies	Kodiak	High Desert Milk	McCain	Transystems
PMT	Rite Stuff Foods	Dutchmen	Monsanto	Performix Nutrition
Coast to Coast Carports	Jayco	Pella	Speciality Sales	Idaho Milk Products
Dell	ARTEC (Workforce)	Packaging Specialities	Chobani	NewCold
Darigold	Les Schwab	Hy-Line	Double L	CropLogic
Everton Mattress	Hilex-Poly	High Desert Milk	Fabri-Kal	