

The Herald

Small Business Development Center opens in Gonzales

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A federally-funded Small Business Development Center will open in Gonzales next month, offering counseling for people from Gilroy to King City.

The center will be in a storefront at 425 Belden St. There has not been a Small Business Development Center in the Salinas Valley since one at Hartnell College closed last year.

CSU-Monterey Bay is the host of the center. Its faculty will make up about half of the 20 people available to give entrepreneurs free advice, said Andrea Zeller-Nield, associate director of the center.

"We've got quite a large skill set" of counselors, said Zeller-Nield. There will be people with knowledge of key local industries, such as wine and agriculture.

People who seek help from small-business development centers "too often come in way too late" after they're deep in financial trouble, said Zeller-Nield. "They've never done a business plan."

Others come in wanting to expand their business, Zeller-Nield said, and that's one area in which the center can help. People may know a lot about the product or service they provide, she said, but not necessarily how to run the business end.

The center will offer seminars as well as counseling. The first one will be at CSUMB Oct. 20, when a company called Constant Contact will demonstrate how people can use e-mail tools to build their customer base. The workshop is free, but reservations are requested and can be made online at tinyurl.com/yaoysc4 or by calling Sanjay Lanka at 512-8973.

Theresa Thomae, director of the Small Business Development Center at Cabrillo College in Aptos, welcomed the Gonzales center and plans collaborative efforts with it.

The Cabrillo center continues to serve the coastal area of Monterey County.