

## FARMINGTON ENGRAVING BUSINESS ACCELERATES BEYOND COVID AND TAPS INTO "HOT" MARKET

**ABOUT THIRD AXIS, LLC.** Bonnie Cummings transitioned from a career as a registered nurse to become an entrepreneur in 2011 as the founder of Third Axis Custom Engraving in Farmington, New Mexico. Initially selling engraving services from a kiosk at the Animas Valley Mall, the business saw success and moved to a downtown storefront where Cummings invested in new machines that expanded her engraving capabilities to include wood, aluminum, leather, cork, and granite. She also added three employees to keep up with demand and help operate the new equipment.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Rapid expansion brought production challenges. Cummings turned to the Business Enterprise Center at San Juan College for help, where she was introduced to New Mexico MEP Innovation Director Denise Williams. Cummings and her staff worked with Williams to map processes that provided clarity for employees and streamlined production. Customer service procedures were also addressed, which maximized positive customer interactions and built repeat sales. Cummings' relationship with New Mexico MEP, part of the MEP National Network™, grew deeper as Williams helped the company overcome new challenges brought on by the COVID-19 emergency, including a move to Cummings' home when downtown businesses were closed. In the intervening years, Cummings has been a solopreneur, relying on a tight-knit group of friends to meet production that emanates from repeat customers and online orders. Managing marketing and growth continues to present challenges.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** While previous work done with New Mexico MEP greatly assisted the business move to Cummings' home, Williams consulted anew on reorganizing inventory and discounting products to create efficiency in the smaller space. Online marketing was enhanced through daily games on Facebook, and incentives were provided that bundled products and incentivized customer loyalty. With introductions by Williams to service providers such as Los Alamos National Laboratory and special pandemic loans, Cummings was able to solidify her base, and the business has continued to grow.

Since recovery, New Mexico MEP helped Cummings research and acquire a specialized printer that imprints color images using the sublimation process. Cummings can now heat-press customers' color photos onto clothing, cups, plaques, ornaments, and more. Customer response to their heat-pressed images, which are permanently embedded and do not fade, have pushed Cummings to invest in additional heat presses and products that have expanded production.

**"Denise and New Mexico MEP has helped immensely in providing resources, contacts, and information about how to market my business. Her assistance with the sublimation printer was huge. This is a very hot market right now and continues to grow"**

-Bonnie Cummings, Owner

## RESULTS



50% increase in profitability due to streamlining



20% increased sales due to new product/equipment



Investments in new products have increased loyalty sales for repeat customers

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