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Booming, not busting

Local businesses thriving despite downturn

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Now may not be the best time to be in car sales, to work as an interior designer or to own a big-name casino chain. But there are a few niches among the rising rates of home foreclosures, depression and unemployment rates that have become lucrative despite of the lethargic economy, or perhaps because of it.

Pay day loan storefronts, low-cost department stores and home rescue establishments are a few of those in the right business at the right time.

Garth Harris is just as lucky.

Like most owners of new businesses, Harris expected a slow year when he opened Fast Wrap at 3839 Spring Mountain Road four months ago. He never guessed he would have to bring on more employees so soon to keep up with all the work. The company wraps boats, RVs, half-completed homes and buildings and most anything else that needs to be protected. When a construction site comes to a halt, a growing epidemic in the valley, Fast Wrap is hired to shrink wrap materials and the building frame until the project starts up again.

"It's a liability issue, and the neighbors don't want to see a half-completed house or building sit there for a year," Harris said. "I didn't expect business to go this well, but because of the economy, people suddenly had to change how they protect things."

The number of people seeking mental or emotional guidance through the shaky economic times also has escalated.

Marriage and family therapist Kimberly Boschee said she and the other therapists and psychiatrists at The Center for Emotional Health have been slammed in the past six months.

"My phone has not stopped ringing," she said.

Boschee's cases in the past year seem to follow the ebb-and-flow economy.

First, she saw a surge of real estate agents, then construction workers, and, most recently, professionals such as engineers and business managers. Overall, the health clinic has seen a rise in depression, anxiety disorders and stressed relationships.

"All of these things affect your mood and relationships," Boschee said. "What we've noticed is, even if money is tight, people are willing to come because we work with them on losing their job or a foreclosure."