

FAST FACTS

Vining Funeral Home

Type of Business:
Funeral Services

Owners:
Mark and Ruth Vining

Address:
1012 S. 2nd Ave.,
Thatcher, AZ 85552

Phone:
(928) 428-4000

Website:
www.viningfuneralhome.com

Business Began: 2009

Employees at Startup: 3/2

Employees in 2010: 4/3

Families Served First Year
(2009): 24

Families Served 2010: 110

Startup Capital: \$1.2 million
Source of Initial Capital: CIT
Bank 7(a) Loan, Personal Assets

SBDC Counselor:
Michael Fox
(former Center Director)
Eastern Arizona College SBDC
(928) 428-8590

Vining Funeral Home – Safford, AZ



Vining Funeral Home staff, Back Row (L to R); LaMar Skinner, Nette Griffin, Jerry Hoopes, Jan McBride, Josh Halverson, Ruth Vining (Owner); Front Row (L to R); Johnathon Stailey, Mark Vining (Owner).

Vining Funeral Home owner **Mark Vining** has always had an understanding of what it means to take care of people.

As a clean up boy in a small town meat market in rural Indiana, Vining would come in before the sun came up and stay late into the evening. "I wanted to make sure that things were just right for our customers," he explained.

As an adult, Vining went to mortuary school in Dallas and worked in the funeral service industry in the Gila Valley for nearly a dozen years. He brought his philosophy of hard work and personal service with him.

In 2006, Vining began working toward his goal to bring his philosophy for funeral service to the area. "We thought that there was a need in the market and

we took a leap of faith," he said. It was Vining's first venture as a business owner.

Knowing that capital would be crucial to his company's success, his wife, **Ruth**, kept her job as a teacher and Vining sought outside expertise to ensure that the business got off to a strong start.

From the initial planning phases, Mark worked with Michael Fox at the **Eastern Arizona College SBDC**, who offered input and suggestions. "Our biggest obstacle was getting the money needed to take the business from paper to reality," Vining said. The SBDC provided direction and helped identify and explore opportunities for funding.

"We would not have received our start-up loan and had the blessing of serving the community without the SBDC," Vining noted. "Mike Fox was a great resource and a great sounding board."

"I am very grateful for their assistance," he said.

In 2009, the Vinings opened their newly built 8,500 square foot facility — the first of its kind in nearly 50 years in the Gila Valley — and Vining Funeral Home was born. Since opening, Vining Funeral Home has served hundreds of families in Graham and Greenlee counties.

Vining credits the quality of his staff (who are referred to as caregivers) for the company's success. "If the people around you believe that they are being taken care of by you, then they will take good care of families," he said.

Vining offers this advice to other new business owners: "I don't know if there's such a thing as too much capital," he stressed. "Plan, plan, plan and make sure that you have enough capital."

Eastern Arizona SBDC



Eastern Arizona College Campus

The **Eastern Arizona College SBDC** is located in Thatcher (Graham County) and has a satellite location in Morenci (Greenlee County). Center Director Kevin Peck and his team served 143 counseling clients and 237 training clients in 2010.



Kevin Peck, Center Director; Julie Davis, Program Assistant; Charmaine Chidester, Business Analyst



*Mark Bryce
President
Eastern Arizona College*

