

Whiteriver Construction – Lakeside, AZ

Jason Carter believes that if he had learned about the **Northland Pioneer College SBDC** a decade earlier, it might have gotten his company into *Forbes* magazine sooner.

"I wish I had known about the SBDC when we first started out," said Carter, a partner in **Whiteriver Construction** with **Corydon Michael Cooley**, a member of the White Mountain Apache Tribe. "We learned the hard way for the first six years."

The partners began working with the SBDC in 2000 to "learn about basic marketing principles, fine tuning the business plan and a lot about financial statements," Carter said. The partners proved to be fast learners. Whiteriver Construction was ranked as one of the fastest-growing companies in the United States in 2008, 2009 and 2010 by *Inc.* magazine and was profiled in *Forbes* magazine earlier this year.

The partners first worked with **Mark Engle** and then with **Tracy Mancuso**, who came on board as Center Director in 2010. "We started doing market analyses to find out what we've accomplished and to establish the value of the company," Carter said.

Engle had recommended the E200 series of classes offered by the SBA to Native American business owners. "It was very helpful," Carter noted. The company went on to be featured in *Forbes* magazine and Carter was named one of the Top 20 individuals under the age of 40 in the construction and design business by *ENR Southwest* magazine.

Today, Whiteriver provides general contracting, construction management and design-build services for public and private clients in Arizona and New Mexico, including work for the National Park Service and for tribal entities.

Cooley founded the business in 1994 as a builder of chicken coops and barbed wire fencing. Carter joined as a manager and later became a partner. "One of our first projects was to repair a barbed wire fence around an



Whiteriver Construction owners Corydon Mike Cooley and Jason Carter

elementary school play area," Carter explained. "Those first years were slow growth. In 1998 we decided to get bigger." The company hired more people and doubled its revenue in 12 months.

One of Whiteriver's highest profile projects was completed at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, in Havasupai Village. A teacher housing complex took six months to complete.

"Every nail, 2 x 4 and worker had to be helicoptered to the bottom," Carter said. The company was also hired to renovate the local jail. "I got to do a lot hiking that year," Carter said. "I would hike down the Grand Canyon on Friday, spend the weekend on the project and then hike back out."

"The most rewarding part of being a business owner is to be able to develop a plan and see it to fruition," Carter said. "Leaving a legacy behind is also a great feeling." Whiteriver counts the renovation of the Monument Valley Visitors Center as one of its legacy projects.

"It takes a lot of hard work to own your own business," Carter stressed. "It takes long hours, dedication and you can't think that you know it all. That's where the SBDC comes in. Having a mentor helps. You have to listen to the advice of others who have been there before."

FAST FACTS

Whiteriver Construction, Inc.

Type of Business:
Construction

Owners:
Corydon Mike Cooley
and Jason Carter

Address:
5805 Wagon Wheel Lane
Lakeside, AZ 85929

Phone:
(928) 537-2920

Website:
www.whiteriverconstruction.com

Business Began: 1994

Employees at Startup: 4

Employees in 2010: 34

First Year Revenue: \$46,328

Revenue in 2010: \$9,577,404

Startup Capital: \$97,900
Source of Initial Capital: Owner
Investment

SBDC Counselors:
Tracy Mancuso, Mark Engle
Northland Pioneer College SBDC
(928) 532-6170

Northland Pioneer College SBDC



Tracy Mancuso
Center Director



Molly Pitts
Business Analyst



Suzy Baldwin
Business Analyst



Northern Pioneer College Show Low Campus



Gary Hanyzewski
Business Analyst



Dr. Jeanne Swarouth
President
Northland
Pioneer College

The **Northland Pioneer College SBDC** is located in Show Low and has a satellite location in Eagar, in Apache County. Center Director Tracy Mancuso and her team served 132 counseling clients and 171 training clients in 2010.

