

TALKING BUSINESS



TF Tire Recognized For Job Creation

The Business Finance Center (BFC), a certified development corporation that is headquartered at 161 North M St. and assists small businesses with U.S. Small Business Administration



Lionel Pires

loans, has recognized the Lionel Pires family and TF Tire and Tire World as "The Most Active Small Business in Tulare County."

Lionel Pires accepted the award at the BFC's 10th annual meeting on Oct. 9 at the Tulare Golf Course.

"They make it easy to put a loan package together," Pires said, referring to BFC.

The Tulare-based business has used SBA loans for its last four expansions, which have created more than 130 jobs in Tulare and Merced counties.

The Pires family became partners in Tulare Firestone Inc. in 1975 and assumed control of the company eight years later. Expansion outside of Tulare began in 1993 with the opening of a TF Tire facility in Exeter and new locations followed in Tulare, Kings, Kern and Merced counties.

The company has 10 facilities, including four in Tulare, and BFC officials said it is one of the largest distributors of tires for agricultural

equipment in the Western U.S.

BFC also recognized Valley Business Bank, which has a branch in Tulare as its "Lender of the Year." The bank has provided nine SBA 504-loan projects totaling more than \$9.4 million and creating more than 100 jobs in Tulare and Kings counties.

The bank also financed the expansion of Mangini Associates, an architectural firm in Visalia, which was the BFC's largest project of the year.

Other BFC projects included a new office at 951 East Merritt Ave. for Tulare surgeon Dr. Cesar Ramos.

The expansion provided him with an office double the size of his former location and will enable Ramos to recruit a full-time vascular surgeon, BFC officials said.

Lisa Hollingshead, is BFC president and is assisted by Dorthy Kilgore, vice president; Judy Correia, credit analyst; and Sidney Bush, office assistant.

Board members are: Chairman Harroll Wiley; Vice Chairman Carl Switzer; Secretary-Treasurer Linda Wammack; and directors Carri Diltz, Bruce Dierkes, Carolyn Rose and Jerry Hawkins.