

Entrepreneurs see upside in downturn

Many Valley small-business founders see the economic slump as opportunity knocking.

By Robert Rodriguez / The Fresno Bee

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Excerpt from article:

Dawn Astorga and Jackie Kane

Astorga and Kane founded Revival Diversified Industries, a Visalia-based startup manufacturer that will use glass to make products such as beach sand, landscaping mulch and art glass.

They are in the process of securing financing.

Astorga's and Kane's business plan has been well received. They were among the 10 finalists in the recent Start It Up: Fresno's \$250K Entrepreneur Challenge.

They said they have an edge: A slumping economy makes their venture attractive to local governments eager for economic development and that could provide financial incentives.

Astorga estimated the company could create between 30 and 50 jobs.

She said she especially wants to provide jobs to women who are trying to put their lives back together, similar to what John Shegerian has done by recruiting former prison inmates to work at his Fresno-based Electronic Recyclers of America.

They are banking on the growing need for cities to reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills -- all of their product could come from recycled glass.

Astorga said she realizes starting a company from scratch is challenging -- especially under existing conditions.

"I really believe that if you start out lean and can grow in a bad economy, that you have a huge advantage over other companies when the economy improves," she said.

"We will be that much stronger."

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