



News Release
For Immediate Release
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Williston has Record Breaking Ribbon Cuttings, Mini Match Grants Halfway through 2021

The Williston Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC), Williston Economic Development (WED) and Small Business Development Center (SBDC) have seen a record setting number of new businesses popping up so far this year.

The Chamber gauges new business development by the number of ribbon cuttings they host each year. Rachel Richter Lordemann, President of the WACC, said so far in 2021 they have held 19 ribbon cuttings. That is the largest number she's seen in the five years she has served the Chamber.

"Williston typically has 25-30 ribbon cuttings in an entire year," said Lordemann. "The fact that we are already there, only halfway through the year, is definitely pretty big for Williston."

Meanwhile, there have already been 20 STAR Fund Mini Match grants allocated so far in 2021.

The Mini Match program assists startup and expansion costs for new businesses within city limits and the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). There are three different types of mini match grants; new business startups, childcare startups or improvements, and business signage.

This year, the Williston City Commission allocated up to \$100,000 for the Mini Match program. Those funds have already been distributed at the halfway mark of 2021.

WED Executive Director Shawn Wenko said he was pleasantly surprised by the interest.

"We knew that the STAR Fund Mini Match Program was popular, but we didn't expect how busy it would be through the first half of 2021. In the 14 years I have been here, we saw more applicants in six months than any other year."

The STAR Fund Mini Match program benefited twelve new businesses, six expansions, and two improvements. Of these businesses, six were retail shops, two therapy services, two coffee shop/eateries, two restaurants, two oilfield supply companies, a beauty service, CrossFit center, mattress store, mechanic shop, residential rental company, and a daycare.

WED and WACC suspect that during the pandemic, businesses and entrepreneurs had a chance to think about expansion opportunities, improvement projects, and to reflect on their passions to make the decision to move forward.

"No one really knew how we were going to come out of this pandemic and everything we are seeing so far is really positive for continued growth of Williston's business community, industry, and economy," said Lordemann. "We are optimistic about how this year will continue to grow."

In an effort to help more startups in 2021, WED will go back to the to the STAR Fund board of directors and the city commission and request up to another \$50,000 for the mini match program for the remainder of 2021.

Anyone interested in learning more about the STAR Fund can visit willistondevelopment.com or contact Brenda Schmidt at brendasc@ci.williston.nd.us or 701-577-8110 for more information.