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the U.S. Small Business Administration wants to help.

Jan. 03, 2013

If you're dreaming of starting a business this year or want to expand an existing one, the U.S. Small Business Administration wants to help.

The SBA's El Paso District office is teaming up with the Small Business Development Center to have one of their quarterly Small Business Lending Fairs on Jan. 10. The event is open to anyone who owns a business or wants to start one, said Phillip C. Silva, director of the SBA's local office.

About 10 lenders will attend, and it is free, Silva said. All the lenders who will participate are part of the SBA's guarantee loan programs. The guest speaker will be Roberto A. Coronado, assistant vice president in charge of the the El Paso branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

"The real gist of the event is to have a forum where people can meet lenders face to face," Silva said. "We take lenders out of the bank environment and put them in an atmosphere where people feel more comfortable to talk to them."

The event also is a perfect opportunity to learn about the SBA's various loan guarantee programs, Silva said. The SBA always sees an uptick in interest in its programs at the beginning of a new year, Silva added. The federal agency doesn't issue loans. Instead, it guarantees them. That allows lenders to be more flexible with their lending policies, provide longer-term loans and ease some credit criteria.

"That helps business," Silva said.

Dr. Alan Carpenter and his wife, Norma, are co-owners of the Upper Valley Urgent Care Center. They used an SBA-backed loan in 2006 to help start the business and

another one last year to expand the clinic. Carpenter, who specializes in internal

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completed shortly before Christmas. The clinic employs more than 30 people.

For the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2012, the local SBA office guaranteed 143 loans totalling \$48.4 million. The dollar amount represented a 15 percent increase from the previous year, Silva said.

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Small Business

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