



Phalaenopsis-Century Sunshine is one type of orchid available at New Earth Orchids. In just over a year, and during the worst economic conditions, Ron Midgett has opened New Earth Orchids and made the business turn a profit. PHOTOS BY JANE PHILLIPS/THE NEW MEXICAN

## Orchid business flourishes

Owner credits help from local economic-development groups for his success

**By Bob Quick**  
The New Mexican

In just over a year, and during the worst economic conditions for a long time, Ron Midgett has started New Earth Orchids and made the business turn a profit.

How did he do that?

"It's a question we've been asking ourselves," Midgett said in a recent interview. "I guess what we've done basically is develop a variety of revenue streams. ... Not just one stream."

Midgett also praised the local economic-development organizations — including the Small Business Development Center at Santa Fe Community College, the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce and Northern New Mexico Connect — for the advice and support they provided him.

Midgett started the business in September 2011 in a greenhouse on Jaguar Drive at Plaza Contenta with a clear mission in mind: He wanted to sell orchids ranging in price from \$10 to \$3,000 for rare specimens.

"Our mission is to provide Santa Fe and greater New Mexico with the best variety and quality orchids available," Midgett said. "And to provide information and help to all who want to grow these incredible flowers through our workshops and newsletters."

Midgett said New Earth Orchids' retail store brings in about 25 percent of the company's revenue through retail sales, with the leasing program providing another 25 percent.



Midgett is recognized around the world as an orchid expert.

An additional 15 percent comes through wholesale, and the rest is Internet sales.

The orchid-leasing program continues to grow and develop, Midgett said, both from individual sales and businesses.

"We've recognized that a lot of the homeowners in Santa Fe are wealthy," Midgett said. "If we can continue to appeal to that clientele, it will help a lot. In fact, we have developed some business from the affluent customers who keep us busy."

A major commercial client has been Thornburg Investment Management, a Santa Fe money-management firm, which bought

30 orchids at a company party and gave them away to those in attendance.

Sales also were strong at The Santa Fe Symphony and Chorus' holiday party at Las Campanas.

"It's a way for us to reach a segment of the population we wouldn't normally have access to," Midgett said. "It was good for our business. And some people bought additional plants at our greenhouse."

New Earth Orchids also benefits from the fact that Midgett is such a well recognized orchid expert who travels the world to talk about a plant that is growing in popularity.

"Orchids have displaced poinsettias as the No. 1 household plant," Midgett said. "Sales in the U.S. are very strong."

Midgett spoke at the Hawaiian Tropical Flowers Association in Hilo, Hawaii, and later was invited by the Taiwan Growers Association as an American Orchid Society judge, one of only 12 society judges to provide judging at the Taiwan International Orchid Show.

"It was a very well-received talk," Midgett said.

When it came to local business development, "my first contacts were Val Alonzo and Deborah Collins at the Small Business Development Center at Santa Fe Community College," Midgett said. "Val directed me in setting up a business in New Mexico. It's a lot more complicated than it was in New Jersey."

In addition, "Northern New Mexico Connect has provided marketing support and website analysis to help us develop contacts and improve our website," Midgett said.

Midgett also joined the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce because it "was a way to get our name out there. We couldn't have done it otherwise."

He also hooked up with Clare Zurawski, who provides website optimization at WESST, a local business assistance group.

"I only had to pay 10 percent of the cost," Midgett said. "The rest was picked up by Northern New Mexico Connect."

Summing up, "we owe our success to ... having worked with all of these groups."

## opens holiday shop at DeVargas

Centaur Cycles and Scooters, 3232 Cerrillos Road, has opened a holiday store in DeVargas Center, across from the post office in the mall. "Our new store features an awesome selection of riding apparel and gifts for you or your favorite rider," wrote Centaur owner Richard Meltz in an email.

Among those items for sale are a line of battery-powered outer-wear for men, women and kids.

"We also got in a huge shipment of helmets for adults, children, street-riders, dirt-riders and snow-riders," Meltz said.

The holiday store also sells Vespa motor scooters and other scooters and motorcycles.

Meltz, by the way, started Centaur Cycles and Scooters in 1980, making the business the longest running powersports business in Santa Fe, he said.

Centaur's DeVargas Center telephone number is 989-5070.



**Bob Quick**  
Business Beat

**Beyond Doorways Travel**, an online travel magazine published in Santa Fe since 2008, has launched an online store called Beyond Doorways Traveler Collection that offers specialty travel wear, travel goods and accessories.

"Our collection has been sourced with an eye toward distinctiveness, function and fashion," an email from founder Melissa Cicci said. "We offer complimentary delivery to local Santa Fe customers." For more information, visit [www.beyonddoorwaystravel.com](http://www.beyonddoorwaystravel.com).

Photogenesis Gallery is leaving the downstairs location off La Fonda's lobby it has occupied for years and moving to the lobby level of the hotel, next to Things Finer.

"It will in all likelihood be sometime in January or the beginning of February," said Joette O'Connor, owner of the gallery, in an email.

The gallery is also planning a moving sale to reduce the amount it needs to transport.

The move became necessary after La Fonda said it wanted to put offices in the gallery space, O'Connor said.

For more information, call 989-9540.

An Albuquerque restaurant, Laura Shirley, owner of Le Chantilly Bakery, has taken over the food operation of Garrett's Desert Inn.

The new restaurant will serve breakfast, lunch and deli items every day but Monday, when it will be closed.

For more information, call Shirley at 984-8500.

WESST's Winter Faire, which will feature the work of local artisans and entrepreneurs, will take place Wednesday from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Santa Fe Business Incubator, 3900 Paseo del Sol.

There will be free entertainment, food, a raffle and hot apple cider.

For more information, call 474-6556.

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### WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

**The Small Business Development Center at Santa Fe Community College:**

**Saturday** — Steps to Starting a Small business; **Jan. 10** — Information Session for CRS Taxpayers; **Jan. 18** — Steps to Starting a Small Business; **Feb. 3** — Steps to Starting a Small Business; **Feb. 9** — Understanding Financial Statements. Call 428-1343 or visit [www.nmsbdc.org](http://www.nmsbdc.org).

**The Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce:**

**Thursday** — Business After Hours event from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the New Mexico History Museum. For more information, call Marilyn Blessie at 988-3279.

**WESST** will hold a series of workshops in December. For information, call 474-6556 for more information.

## In brief

**Santa Fe foreclosure rates, mortgage delinquencies rise**

for September 2011, 4.9 percent of mortgage loans were 90 days or more delinquent compared to 4.69 percent for the same period last year, representing an increase of 0.21 percentage points.

**Smith's stores welcome**

ference for local families and individuals," said Marsha Gilford, Smith's vice president of public affairs. "We value our long-standing partnership with The Salvation Army and the impact this campaign has for our neighbors in need."

**Alternative gift market**

Participants can select tax-deductible gifts of urgently needed assistance to local and international organizations that provide a variety of services including, medical help, shelter and food, working to reduce illiteracy, and assisting homeless veterans, among other gifts.

Gift-givers can choose from more than 60 different items, including visits to dentists