

# smart business

Francis Tuttle Technology Center's Launch Pad offers burgeoning businesses the foundation they need to be successful

by Morgan Day

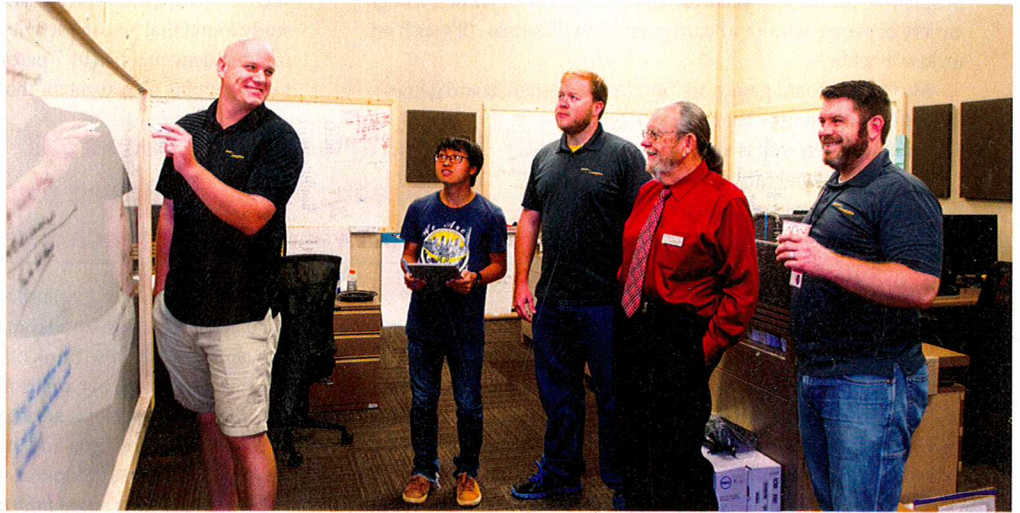
Wander through Francis Tuttle Technology Center's Launch Pad business incubator and you'll see a whirlwind of activity from an eclectic mix of companies working to make their businesses successful.

You might see an inventor who's packaging his new product to sell at Walmart. He's surrounded by pallets of product ready to hit shelves for the first time. Turn a corner and you might see software developers tapping away at their computers. You might come across a contractor whose crews are out in the field siding houses. On a busy day, it's not uncommon to see interns claiming space along the hallway floors as they pore over their laptops.

"You'll see just about anything," said Fred Green, director of the Launch Pad at Francis Tuttle. "It's just a beehive of activity of business owners learning and producing and becoming sustainable businesses."

Overseeing the Launch Pad program, Green is tasked with first analyzing companies' hurdles, then counseling business owners, offering technical assistance and finally coaching them through the duration of the program. He provides entrepreneurs with the information they need to make the right decisions for their companies, and, once the participants "graduate" out of the program, they'll have the skills and experience they need to continue to grow their companies in the right direction.

"At the Launch Pad, we work with small startup companies and sometimes early-stage companies and we analyze what their constraints might be that would prevent them from being successful," he said. "We put together a timed series of milestones to address those constraints. And when we've done everything and the client has completed all the milestones, we boot'em back in the real world."



The Launch Pad at Francis Tuttle is located within the Francis Tuttle Business Innovation Center in Edmond. The business incubator houses eight furnished offices for clients and five areas ranging from 400 to 1,400 square feet that can be used for light manufacturing, warehousing, logistics or other laboratory applications. Clients also have access to two conference rooms and a classroom, all equipped with audiovisual capabilities.

Its ultimate goal is to help entrepreneurs create a sustainable business that will contribute to regional economic growth and development. Green said it's small businesses—like the ones involved in the Launch Pad—that have the biggest effect on the vitality of a region.

"According to the Department of Commerce, 97 percent of employers in the state are small businesses," he said. "The Devon Energy companies and Sonic Drive-Ins only represent 3 percent of companies that have employees."

When it comes to getting into the program, not all applicants make the cut. Green explains the criteria he looks for when selecting new candidates for the program.

"They have to be coachable; that's the first thing we look at," he said. "We've turned down applicants who think they know it all

## PAYING MORE FOR HOME INSURANCE?

Contact Us for a Home & Auto Quote!

Earthquake Coverage Available!

Traci Sarani, Debbie Pybas & Larry Jones, Agents  
Johnnie Jones, CSR | Kelsey Jones, CSR



**513-6500** [larry.jones@aaaok.org](mailto:larry.jones@aaaok.org) 1312 N Kelly Ave *Corner of Danforth & Kelly, Edmond*

already. They need to be able to listen, to learn and to work within the program. What I also look for is if we (the program) can make a difference, if coming into this program is going to significantly improve the chances that this company will be successful and sustainable."

The incubator typically houses 11 companies, which is capacity. The business men and women typically spend between 12 and 36 months in the program.

"Between 18 and 24 months is when our clients are ready to cut the umbilical cord," Green said, adding six companies have graduated from the program since its start in August 2013.

While business incubators began springing up in the US in 1958, the Launch Pad at Francis Tuttle started growing its roots three years ago as Peggy Geib, Francis Tuttle's assistant superintendent for business and industry services, saw a need for small business development in the area and spearheaded the incubator.

The program in Edmond is certified by the state and its clients see benefits because of that, Green said. As an Oklahoma Department of Commerce certified business incubator, the Launch Pad qualifies resident clients that are in good standing in the incubation program or approved graduates of an incubator program for a five-year state business income tax exemption, with an additional five-year exemption for businesses that do a majority of their sales outside of Oklahoma. Green said this certification also ensures continuity from program to program.

What Green most wants the Edmond and greater Oklahoma City community to know is that, worldwide, business incubation has proved successful. The Launch Pad at Francis Tuttle is no exception.

"Incubation, it works," he said.

"Companies that go through a program like this have a much higher probability of succeeding."

For more information about the Launch Pad at Francis Tuttle and to see if you meet the admission criteria, visit [ww2.launchpadft.org](http://ww2.launchpadft.org).



**Back to School Special**

**8 Lessons**  
for **\$295**

**CADENCE EQUESTRIAN**

**348-7469** 14150 S. Pine St., Edmond  
[CadenceEquestrian.com](http://CadenceEquestrian.com)



**Before & After School Transportation**

Deer Creek & Edmond Schools



**Extra Large Playgrounds!**  
Game Tables • Clubs  
Cooking • Crafts • Video Games  
Basketball • Computers



**Personal Service Caring Staff**



**Advanced Pre-K Program**  
Phonics • Math • Science  
Project Work • Social Skills  
Motor Development

**Camelot**  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**Deer Creek**  
19000 N. May Ave.  
OKC, OK 73012  
562-1315  
Infant to school-age

**Quail Pointe**  
13925 Quail Pointe Dr.  
OKC, OK 73134  
254-5220  
Infant to 5 years

**Edmond**  
24 NW 146th St.  
Edmond, OK 73013  
749-2262  
Infant to school-age