



### Arkansas Small Business Development Center

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# Client Success Story

## Arkansas Small Business Development Center University of Arkansas - Fort Smith

When Christi Forrest was referred to the UA Fort Smith SBDC for help with a business plan, Vonelle Vanzant, the SBDC Center Director, had never heard of the “stuff your own stuffed animal concept.” However, as Christi shared her enthusiasm and experience with this type of store, Vanzant was able to see Christi’s vision and understand the appeal of choosing, stuffing, dressing—and even bathing—your own delightful animal critter.

Christi and Vanzant worked together to develop a written business plan that Christi could use to share her vision of putting such a store in Fort Smith’s Central Mall with area lenders. Arvest Bank in the Forrest’s home town of Wister, Oklahoma funded an SBA Express Loan for her. Christi and her husband, Clyde, combined the loan proceeds with some of their own funds to build-out their chosen spot in the mall and to purchase the equipment and inventory needed to make their dream a reality. Their shop, Forrest Critters, opened on September 30, 2006, in Central Mall close to the women’s Dillard’s store. Christi says “Vonelle was so much help throughout the process. Her assistance and insight both educated and encouraged me. It was wonderful to have the UA Fort Smith SBDC there when we needed it.”

The Forrest’s would like to invite all of you to stop by, bring your children or grandchildren, and enjoy the experience of creating your own critter the next time you visit Fort Smith’s Central Mall. These soft, cuddly critters, complete with the clothes and shoes of your choice, are guaranteed to be a hit with all the stuffed animal lovers in your life.



**Forrest Critters**  
**Christi and Clyde Forrest**