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Local small businesses innovate to survive

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Always high, the failure rate of small businesses in Sacramento has doubled from last year, reaching about 60 percent, said Panda Morgan, director of the Northeastern California Small Business Development Center. Local firms are trying to survive by stepping up their offerings and trying new combinations in an effort to carve out a niche.

The owners of Parkside Pharmacy in Land Park, for instance, have overhauled the traditional drugstore with a modern twist – offering spa and dermatological services, including Botox and microdermabrasion; yoga classes; home accessories; and local artists' jewelry.

Michelle Ortego, a licensed aesthetician, and her husband, John, a compounding pharmacist, opened their doors a little more than a year ago. The original pharmacy had shut down after a 53-year run on the corner of Sutterville Road and Land Park Drive.

"People are so thankful ... so happy we've brought the pharmacy back and added so much to it," said Michelle Ortego.

Spa service sales have steadily gone up each month since they opened, John Ortego said, and storewide, the pharmacy is on track to increase sales by 100 percent in its second year of business. However, he added that prescription sales are not as high as he had anticipated they would be at this point, though more money has been coming in from merchandise than was predicted.

The Ortegos have responded by offering a free facial for anyone who transfers a prescription to Parkside.

