



EMERGENT
WIRELESS



RETURNING TO FAMILY ROOTS IN FREMONT COUNTY

There's nothing half so pleasant as coming home again.

- Margaret Elizabeth Sangster

In recent years, growing numbers of tech nomads have been following suit—flocking to rural communities to escape the congestion and cost of metropolitan areas and reset their work-life balances. This is precisely what DJ James decided to do back in 2010 when he left CenturyLink. He grew up in the Fremont County, Colorado area and left to attend college at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in industrial technology, he spent the next 15 years of his professional life working in different corporate telecommunications companies between Fort Collins, Boulder, and Denver.

"We're just starting to scratch the surface of the opportunities that lie before us. The next several years are going to be very exciting."

DJ James, GM, Emergent Wireless

"I am a fifth-generation Fremont County resident, and I decided to return in 2010," he explains. "I love telecommunications, but never really liked working for just one company and wanted to be my own boss. So, I went out and found a really good master agent. Instead of selling just one company's set of services, I had 150 or so at my disposal."

And that is exactly what DJ did until he discovered the Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) TechSTART center in downtown Cañon City in early 2018. "One of my friends is a founding member of TechSTART," he relates. "While I was very happy to be back in Fremont County, I was isolated from other professionals by working out of my home office. He told me there was a thriving tech community in downtown Cañon City, and I told him 'he was crazy.' But I soon discovered he was right."

GETTING STARTED IN THE TECHSTART CENTER

DJ secured an office in the TechSTART center and hung out his “shingle” in the lobby directory. Until he came across TechSTART, the business case for leasing a physical office space was negligible—there simply was no reason to spend money on an office outside of his home. But this changed when he was introduced to the TechSTART center in historic APEX building in downtown Cañon City.

“With TechSTART, I am part of a larger community of entrepreneurs and small businesses,” DJ observes. “They have some of the same challenges as me and actively seek to collaborate and help each other.” The “straight talk” that occurs between the members is something DJ particularly appreciates. “It is a noncompetitive environment, one where members provide unbiased recommendations and feedback based on their areas of expertise,” he continues. “The entire TechSTART community—including management team—wants the very best for each and every business in the center, and they tell it as it is.”

“We’re opening up a rural technology corridor in Colorado in Region 13, ... and tech businesses will want a local company with resources in close proximity and an unwavering commitment to their local communities. We plan to make Emergent Wireless that partner.”

DJ James, GM, Emergent Wireless

The office configuration DJ received when he moved into TechSTART aligned with what he needed as a small business. “The cost was obviously right—probably half of what leasing an office elsewhere in town would be,” he says. “Plus, everything is packaged together—high-speed internet and utilities.” And as DJ frequently meets with clients, he is a regular user of the high-tech conference rooms that come with flat screen monitors, and video conferencing. “It certainly beats meeting someone at my house or at the corner coffee shop,” DJ quips

The regular TechSTART meetups are something DJ also appreciates. “In addition to different members sharing ideas, FEDC brings in regular guests to speak about topics that provide information and ideas that TechSTART members can use to improve their businesses,” he observes. “These add real value on topics that most may not have considered before.”

Emergent Wireless: Commercial and Residential

Initially, Emergent Wireless was focused on opening up new high-speed wireless corridors for residents and businesses in Fremont County. But the wireless provider is not allowing itself to be boxed in by county lines. It plans to extend those services to surrounding rural counties in the future.

Thinking outside of the box, Emergent Wireless plans to add a managed services portfolio to its service offerings. These capabilities include network, firewall, and security services.



FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL

UNCOVERING A NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY AT EMERGENT CAMPUS

When FEDC members partnered to launch a second business campus in Florence—also in Fremont County—DJ found himself at the center of a new “networking” conversation. The inaugural business in the new 80,000 square foot campus was Second-61, with offerings that include Tier I and Tier II enterprise service desk services. In order to provide the level of service demanded by its customers, Second-61 required high-speed telecommunications connections into its enterprise service center. “A large U.S. federal agency is one of Second-61’s customers,” DJ says. They not only demand but rather mandate service level agreements around latency, redundancy, and availability.

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Adding the high-speed telecommunications capabilities Second-61 needed with its expansion from Cañon City to Florence meant there would be a lot of extra capacity. This is when the entrepreneurs at FEDC and Second-61 teams put their innovation caps on. Rather than leave the capacity unused, Second-61 formed Emergent Wireless and put one of the most experienced telecommunications leaders in the area in charge as general manager.

“I jumped at the chance to lead this effort,” DJ recalls. “There are immense opportunities to take high-speed wireless into areas of Fremont County and surrounding rural counties where DSL connections are still the norm.” These businesses are hamstrung, and residences are impacted as well. “Schools nowadays assume children have high-speed internet at home, and their assignments reflect this assumption,” DJ explains. “But in many rural areas of the state, that is far from the case.”

EMERGENT WIRELESS HIGHLIGHTS

Launched: Late 2019

Location:
Emergent Campus,
Florence, CO

Website:
emergentwireless.com





GETTING STARTED WITH EMERGENT WIRELESS

Initially, DJ is focusing the launch of Emergent Wireless on a corridor that extends into the eastern part of the county. "There are 15 to 20 businesses and over 100 residences along the route," he comments. "This includes the local wastewater treatment plant. We're going to take them over night from internet of the 1990s into the second decade of the 21st century." After proving its business model in this first pilot, Emergent Wireless has plans to extend high-speed wireless into many other areas of Fremont County as well as surrounding rural counties.

High-speed wireless is just one area of focus for Emergent Wireless. DJ also plans to add managed services for networks, firewalls, and security. "We're opening up a second technology corridor in Colorado with Region 13, which is comprised of four rural counties that include Fremont, and tech businesses will want a local company with resources in close proximity and an unwavering commitment to their local communities," he says.

"We plan to make Emergent Wireless that partner." In March of 2018, Region 13 was recognized by the state of Colorado as the state's second technology sector partnership, the "Upper Arkansas Tech Sector Partnership" (UATSP). The UATSP is a unique designation given by the state that represents a forward-looking approach to create a tech sector ecosystem in rural Colorado.

With DJ's new charge as general manager of Emergent Wireless, he had to give up his office in TechSTART and relocate to one in the Emergent Campus. But this does not mean he had to sever ties with TechSTART. "TechSTART and the Emergent Campus are sister organizations," he explains. "I still have access to the co-working space and conference rooms at TechSTART. As I have frequent meetings in Cañon City, I often find myself using one of its conference rooms or working from its co-working space. It's as if I have two offices."



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Tenants at both TechSTART and the Emergent Campus are part of the internship program at Cañon City High School that places students as interns in area businesses. "As we are poised to rapidly grow our business and aspire to foster deeper connections with the local community, Emergent Wireless plans to engage one or more interns later this year," DJ says. Emergent Wireless is putting real skin in the game when it comes to its support for the local community. "We are donating 20 percent of our profits to local schools," DJ continues. "Technology is a pivotal part of today's learning environment, and whether it is Chromebooks or high-speed internet access, Emergent Wireless wants to be there to support the cause."

There is something very special happening in Fremont County and the UATSP, and DJ is pleased to be involved in the transformation. "When I graduated from high school and left for college, there were no opportunities to return to the community—especially if you entered the technology space like me," DJ notes. "This is no longer the case in Fremont County, or the other three counties comprising the Upper Arkansas (UATSP). While I wasn't there at the very start when TechSTART launched, I am thrilled to have joined the 'ride' when I did. We're just starting to scratch the surface of the opportunities that lie before us. The next several years are going to be very exciting."

EMERGENT WIRELESS

Emergent Wireless was created to assist in bringing reliable broadband to underserved rural communities within Fremont County. Emergent Wireless provides fixed wireless internet access for homes and businesses. We also offer VoIP phone service, and other professional hosting services for businesses. To learn more about Emergent Wireless, please visit our website www.emergentwireless.com.

FEDC TechSTART

Fremont Economic Development Corporation is a 501(c)6 professional economic development organization focused directly on business attraction, retention and expansion in Fremont County, Colorado. With an established and growing network of business, academic and governmental partners, we directly assist companies with competitive location or expansion projects by connecting them with the right people, the appropriate resources and the most meaningful and relevant information. FEDC's TechSTART program is an award-winning tech sector co-working community, creating an innovation catalyst for rural Colorado.

FEDC TechSTART is a proud supporter of the Upper Arkansas Technology Sector Partnership, the second tech sector partnership in the state of Colorado.