

Sustained Relationship Enables Auto Shop's Success

By Matt Loehman, Development and Special Projects Director, The Loan Fund

Aaron Perez isn't sure how he heard about The Loan Fund, but he's certainly glad he did. Twelve years ago, the Albuquerque entrepreneur needed about \$16,000 for equipment and working capital for the auto shop he co-owns with his brother, Jordan Perez, but the two were having a hard time getting a bank loan because they didn't have adequate collateral or a credit history that would help them qualify.



Jordan Perez, left, and Aaron Perez

Over the years, his company, Perez Collision Center, borrowed several times and took out lines of credit for \$10,000 and \$50,000 to finance growth. One of the larger loans was for \$35,000 to update a frame rack, which is used to repair damage to the inner frame of a vehicle — "it's a frame-straightening machine that pulls the frame of a car back into place like bubble gum," said Aaron during a recent phone interview.

Having the funds to meet business needs helped the Perezes' business pick up speed. It allowed the partners to buy inventory and the tools required to make the kinds of repairs their customers need.

Norma Valdez, director of lending at The Loan Fund, worked with the Perezes over the years. She has seen firsthand how the company has built a reputation for the quality and speed of its work, which has attracted business from fleet companies that require quick turnaround — 50 to 60 cars in a week, Aaron Perez estimated — and high standards.

Online reviews echo the praise, with customers applauding the company's affordability and willingness to accommodate drop-ins.

The result has been tremendous growth in the past few years, enabling the Perezes to create 10 jobs in addition to their positions. Since receiving their first loan in 2005, the company's sales have increased seventeenfold. Aaron Perez attributes that growth to "our persistence and doing our best to serve our customers — and to businesses that trust in our work ethics, such as the Loan Fund."

“It has been great to know that there is someone out there that knows about falling down and getting back up,” he said about the Loan Fund. “We always stay humble and never give up, and for The Loan Fund to see that in us, we are truly grateful for the help and push we have received.”

The Loan Fund is a nonprofit community development financial institution (CDFI) that provides affordable loans, training, and business consulting to entrepreneurs, business owners, and nonprofit organizations throughout New Mexico. Founded in 1989, The Loan Fund has provided over \$72 million in loans to help create or preserve more than 8,500 jobs statewide. For more information, call 505-243-3196 or visit <http://loanfund.org/>.

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