

## **New business' best friend leaving**

### ***Carole Parks stepping down from Small Business Development Center***

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THOMAS DOYLE - Victoria Advocate

An agency that has been an economic driving force in an area that spans 11 counties is moving to University of Houston-Victoria's School of Business Administration, a move that could give students and faculty a chance to work with entrepreneurs, the department's dean said Friday.

The change also signifies a change in directors as Carole Parks steps down from the Small Business Development Center after 13 years.

"She's done an exceptional job with the SBDC," said Charles Bullock, dean of UHV's School of Business Administration.

Bullock foresees as well that moving the center into his department will lead to the possibility of research projects.

The school is developing a new master's degree in economic development and entrepreneurship, which will work well with the SBDC, he said.

Under Parks' tenure, the agency has helped create or retain more than 500 businesses and more than 1,700 jobs in the 11-county area it serves, according to a university news release. It has helped businesses secure \$49 million in capital.

From now until January, Parks will retain the title of director, and help the center become a part of the School of Business Administration in an effort to increase the university's role in economic development in Victoria and the surrounding region, she said in a Friday interview.

In January, Parks will become a full-time faculty member in the school of business administration before her retirement in August. After that, she plans to continue to teach part-time, she said.

"I know she'll bring experience as well as her professionalism into the classroom," Bullock said. "We're real excited about having her teach for us in the spring and in the summer."

The man to whom Parks reported over the last 13 years shared Bullock's opinion on her accomplishments with the organization.

"(Parks') impact on the SBDC has been transformative," said Don Smith, UHV provost.

When Parks first started, she was the only full-time employee, and worked with a part-time counselor and a part-time secretary. Today, the agency employs five full-time

business development specialists, two full-time support staff members and several student workers.

But Parks said the jobs and businesses created, along with numerous awards, aren't what matters most to her.

"The highlight of everything was the one-on-one (interaction) with the people, and knowing what a difference you make," Parks said.

Sometimes those who find success through the help of the SBDC come back to say "thank you," which makes all the hard work worthwhile, she said.

Daily management of the SBDC will fall to Associate Director Keith Mudd, who will become interim director in January.

"The main thing is to continue the mission as we've been operating for the last 13 years," Mudd said. "Carole has done a wonderful job of getting us to this point."

**Mudd said he plans to apply for the full-time director position.**

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