



**OfficeMax Celebrates a Decade in Casper**

*By Jennifer Scott, CAEDA*

It's been nearly ten years since Boise Cascade Office Products (now OfficeMax) opened a customer service call center in Casper, bringing new jobs to the area. With the help of the Casper Area Economic Development Alliance (CAEDA), the Economic Development Joint Powers Board (EDJPB) and members of both state and local government, the project moved from possibility into reality. "It was truly a team effort on all fronts," said Steve Elledge, past CAEDA Chairman and current Regional Director of the Wyoming Business Council. "We put together a competitive incentive package and were very excited they chose to come to Casper." Boise selected Casper in 1998 as the site of their third call center and the company credited the community's high level of commitment to the project as the deciding factor in the tough selection process. Groundbreaking began later that year and the facility was completed the following summer. The grand opening event, highlighted by a ribbon cutting and community open house was held in September 1999 with Governor Jim Geringer, Mayor Tim Monroe and other community leaders in attendance. "The Boise Cascade Office Products call center was a highly sought after prize because it offered many jobs and would involve adding technology infrastructure to the community," recalls Tim Monroe, who was the Mayor of Casper at the time and now serves on CAEDA's Board of Directors.

CAEDA and the EDJPD helped facilitate the original purchase of the property for Boise Cascade, as well as the construction of the 65,000 square-foot building through the incentive and loan package. As part of the agreement "CAEDA Drive" was also put into place, linking the Boise Cascade facility to nearby Eastridge Mall. The connector road provides employees easy access to the food court and other amenities there. Earlier this month, CAEDA and the EDJPB announced that OfficeMax made an early pay off of the facility loans. "We were pleased to learn that OfficeMax paid off their loan early," said Jim Porter, CAEDA Treasurer. "The company has made tremendous contributions to the community since its arrival. CAEDA is happy to have played a role in making their customer service center a reality."

When Boise Cascade opened its Customer Service Call Center in 1999 it brought over 200 new jobs to Casper. The center has expanded since then and currently employs 300 people. In 2004 Boise Cascade purchased OfficeMax and shifted its focus to office products, away from lumber and paper holdings. A name change also took place during the acquisition and the organization is now known as OfficeMax. "We have seen several changes in the last 10 years," remarked Greta Ellwood, OfficeMax Manager of Field Human Resources in Casper. "We moved to a 24/7 support operation in 2004 to continue offering world class service to our growing and changing customer base and offering new employment opportunities here in Casper," she continued. "The OfficeMax Customer Service Center has had a great first 10 years here in Casper. We look forward to the future as we continue to grow and support the Casper community."