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TED Conference is Incubator for Innovative Ideas

By Tim Nisly, Founder, TEDxABQ

The adage that business success is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration hit home for me through TED, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the spread of inspiring ideas. Established in 1996 by magazine publishing entrepreneur Chris Anderson on the basis of a 1984 gathering of leaders in the fields of design, technology and entertainment, TED aims to provide a platform for the world's most innovative thinkers, visionaries and teachers to help people gain a better understanding of the world's most serious problems and hear some ideas about how to solve them. The Sapling Foundation, TED's parent organization since 2001, has supported projects that use these tools to create sustainable change in areas such as global public health, poverty alleviation and biodiversity through such organizations as the Acumen Fund, OneWorld Health, and PATH.

My introduction to TED was through a simulcast of a TED conference in 2010. For five days, the 600 conference attendees watched brilliant speakers live on the big screen at a resort in California. In between, we shared meals and late-evening discussions. During the "audience talks" session of the last day, it turned out those people I'd been hanging out with all week were extraordinary. One guy from the East Coast had designed a camera from an Xbox that restored an artist's ability to draw despite losing the use of his limbs in a car crash. Other participants had launched extraordinary magazines or tech startups.

That's when I realized that amazing people were just ordinary people who believed in their ideas and themselves and were willing to work hard to make great things happen. The Sapling Foundation acquired TED in 2001 and continues to seek ways — through mass media, technology and market forces — to further the ideas generated by annual TED conferences in California and the United Kingdom. In 2009 the organization rolled out TEDx, to allow people like me to organize our own events.

I founded TEDxABQ in 2009 to highlight New Mexico's best ideas and to share the concept that anyone can truly be extraordinary. We spend nine months every year looking for these great ideas, and selected individuals spend three months with professional speaking coaches honing their ideas. We do this because we know that great ideas put into action are the backbone of a strong economy and healthy communities.

On Sept. 8, at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, TEDxABQ will once again highlight 17 incredible ideas. We'll produce the videos and release them to the world. But the real magic of the event takes place in the remarkable conversations shared by participants who get excited about the ideas presented and carry that excitement to their own ideas. As participants hear from people who are changing New Mexico and the world, some will decide it's time to build out their own idea. They will commit themselves, adding perspiration to their inspiration, and they will become extraordinary.

For more information about TED, visit TED.com. For details about the September event, see <http://tedxabq.com/>.

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