Published on *DSU* (http://desu.edu)

Success Stories

2010 SUCCESS STORIES

Betty Jean?s Special Sauce

Outline of Need:
Cheryl and Orville Carney started a small catering company and were desperately in need of a licensed commercial kitchen to prepare their food products. The Carney?s had been sharing kitchen space with a local restaurant when they saw an advertisement in the Dover Post for DCED?s Food Business Incubation Center. This was an answered prayer for the Carney?s who now had a new place to prepare their food items for sale. The Carney?s had also begun exploring marketing a special sauce from a favorite family recipe.

How DCED Helped:
The Carney?s were able to rent space in DCED?s kitchen incubator and have access to a licensed commercial kitchen to expand their catering business named An Affair to Remember. The Carneys were also able to begin seriously pursuing marketing Betty Jean?s special sauce. They hosted a sample taste testing event at DSU asking participants to rate their sauce compared to their major competitors. SBI students assisted the participants and recorded the results; Betty Jean?s Special Sauce was rated the best from 100% of the sauce tasters.

The Results:
The Carney?s are now exploring difference bottling options for their sauce and considering the recommendation provided to them by the SBI team members. They have become the exclusive in-house caterers for all special events at the Milford Senior Center. They have already catered three large events at this location. The Carney?s will also be hosting a cooking show at the Delaware State Fair this year. Cheryl Carney recently wrote to DCED?s Incubator Manager expressing her gratitude and stated, ?We can never say it enough and we honestly say it at least once a day ? we would never have done this without the help of you and all the staff at DCED. When we first walked into the kitchen at the Senior Center it was just like the incubator kitchen. Having the opportunity to work in your kitchen, along with the safety training you provided, allowed us to walk into our own kitchen and work with confidence.? The DCED staff continues to assist the Carney?s and is helping them work with DSU faculty to determine the shelf life of their sauce.

God?s Creation receives Marketing Assistance

Outline of Need:
Michelle Donnatien, owner of God?s Creations, a company specializing in natural hair and skin products was seeking a new marketing plan for her business. She wanted to explore social media and needed guidance on how best to promote her unique hair and skin products.

Michele had begun to use YouTube but felt her videos lacked customer appeal. She was also uncertain about her pricing strategy and how to position her products in the marketplace.

How DCED Helped:
Michele began meeting with DCED?s Enterprise Consultant who provided her one-on-one technical assistance in developing a new marketing strategy for her business. With the additional help of a team of SBI students Michele was able to fine-tune her YouTube video and expose the uniqueness of her product to a much wider audience of potential customers. Ms. Donnatien has been working with staff from DCED for over a year. It was determined that her pricing structure as not adequate, and that she needed to explore ways to reduce her costs. The SBI team also assisted Ms. Donnatien in identifying possible alternatives for packaging her products in order to bring her costs down.

The Result:
Through the technical assistance Ms. Donnatien received from DCED and the SBI student team, she realized that her products were not properly marketed, and that her packaging needed to be changed. An alternative packaging approach had to be considered in order to sustain her business. She had to either lower her costs or raise her prices; in the current economic environment she felt a price increase would hurt her sales. Through the assistance she received from DCED and the SBI, she now has her newly packaged product for sale at the local natural foods grocer in Dover, and her business is profitable.

DCED helps Best Loser in Delaware become a Winner!

Outline of Need:
Debbie Lonski of Exquisite Nutrition had been operating her business for over a year without a business plan. Mrs. Lonski, at one time, was considered obese and needed to lose weight in order to maintain her health. She became involved with Herbal Life Products, lost weight, and wanted to share her success with others. Mrs. Lonski had the passion for her business but lacked the clear direction of a plan to move her business forward.

How DCED Helped:
Through the technical assistance made available to her through DCED, Mrs. Lonski now has her vision on paper and is already meeting some of her goals. She is working to develop a comprehensive business plan to provide a roadmap for growing her business venture.

The Results:
Mrs. Lonski started her first ?Best Loser in Delaware? weight challenge in Dover and continues to encourage others struggling to lose weight to join her in working to become healthier. Her vision is to see a healthier population in Delaware, thus her saying, ?I want to see less of you next time.? Mrs. Lonski trains others to become coaches and holds support meeting throughout Kent and Sussex Counties. Three sites are now in operation in Delaware.

2009 SUCCESS STORIES

DCED Assists Two Winners of Third Annual Business Plan Competition for Family Child Care Providers

Outline of Need:
In the spring of 2009, The Delaware Center for Enterprise Development (DCED) and its partners, such as the First State Community Loan Fund (FSCLF), announced the third annual state-wide business plan competition for child care providers. In the past, only family child care providers could apply; this year the competition was open to center owners, as well. Citigroup provided FSCLF with the funds for the awards. It was announced that the awards would be $5,000 for first place and $2,500 for second place Family Child Care Providers. The best plan submitted by a Child Care Center owner would receive $5,000; second place would receive $2,500.

Mrs. Donna Savini a large family child care provider, in the rural community of Lincoln, Sussex County, Delaware, met with DCED?s Enterprise Consultant. Although they only met that one time, the two of them stayed in contact throughout the business plan writing process. In the spring, DCED offered the Developing Your Family Child Care Business course in each of the three counties. The interest from Sussex County did not warrant providing a separate class; those participants were invited to join the Kent County class. The class met on Saturday mornings from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Mrs. Crystal Wheatley, a Level II Family Child Care Provider from Millsboro, DE, attended the classes in Dover even though it meant she would need to be on the road by 7:30 a.m. and travel over 50 miles each way.

How DCED Helped:
Ilona communicated with not only these two caregivers, but with 7 family child care providers and 1 child care center owner. They talked by phone and sometimes very late at night or very early in the morning when the children were not present. Sections of their plans were e-mailed to Ms. Figat, as the caregivers completed them. This system seemed to work best.

The Results:
The completed business plans had to be sent electronically and reach the First State Community Loan Fund?s office by May 15, 2009. In the early hours of the deadline date, the business plans were transmitted.

Then, on June 27, 2009, DCED and its partners celebrated with over 25 of the 41 family child care applicants at a reception held at Delaware State University in the College of Business at the Dover Campus. After brunch was served, many providers and their families, along with technical assistance representatives from partnering agencies throughout the state, were awaiting to hear the names of the five winners. Mrs. Savini won first place and Mrs. Wheatley won second place.

These caregivers are thrilled to have accomplished such a tedious task as completing a business plan. Ilona continues to keep in touch with the caregivers. She also still communicates with the non-winners encouraging them to improve their plans. Anyone interested in technical assistance to help with completing their business plans can call Ilona at 302-857-6953.

DCED Assists Small Business Owner

Outline of Need:
Maurice Curtis of EliteAutoTuning was in the process of publishing his website and needed assistance in developing a business plan. He sells accessories, such as body kits, wheels, and electronics, for high-end vehicles. He recognized that he needed to rent a location where he could not only customize the vehicles, but also store parts he accumulated through auctions. Furthermore, Mr. Curtis not only wants to acquire a brick and mortar location; he also has a strong desire to make his services mobile. By being mobile, Maurice will be able to make his customization more desirable and accessible, as he would travel to the customer?s location. In order to expand and to offer these services, he would need a loan, so he came to Ilona Figat, Enterprise Consultant for assistance.

How DCED Helped:
While meeting with Maurice to discuss the components of the business plan; Ilona realized Maurice already had the marketing plan in place. He has customer savvy and understood that features tell the customer what he offers, but the benefits is what will sell his products. He was in the process of building a customer base, contacting auto dealers, and negotiating with some manufacturers. EliteAutoTuning wants to be the first place where customers look for their upper-end vehicle customization needs. He knows his target market and is strategizing accordingly.

The Results:
Within two weeks, Maurice brought the finished business plan to Ilona for review. The business plan was well written, needing just a few additions. Once the financial needs were identified, Ms. Figat recommended that Maurice and his partners start the initial steps of the loan process.

In June, Maurice and Ilona met again. The website was now getting approximately 160 hits a day. He was not satisfied with this low number. Maurice?s vision is to create a network for the international aftermarket, including customers, parts manufacturers, dealerships, magazines and tuning shops. In order for Elite AutoTuning to become the leading online resource for the high-end aftermarket; Maurice feels he not only needs more exposure, but he needs to move quickly.

Ms. Figat and Maurice reviewed his marketing strategy. She commended him for the growth his company was experiencing; assuring him that he was doing quite well for a start-up business. During that meeting, Maurice identified other services he could offer providing him with even more exposure on the Web. One such service identified is to offer classifieds to customers wishing to sell their customized vehicles. There would be no charge for the classifieds; Maurice believes that in order to build a business, the relationships need to be built first. This is one service he could offer without it causing any hardship to the business.

Maurice and Ilona also discussed a new product (patent pending) to be introduced in the United States during the late Fall. Maurice is appealing to the manufacturer, in Colombia, to contract with Elite AutoTuning. Elite wants to serve as the sole distributor in the U.S. This opportunity was discussed; with Maurice and Ilona identifying a number of concerns to discuss with the manufacturer. Once these issues are addressed, a pricing structure would be developed; and Maurice should be on his way to not only marketing the new product, but also serving as the primary distributor in the United States.

Ilona notes that some entrepreneurs just need hand holding, reassurance, encouragement, and validation for their hard work. Maurice needed someone to confirm that he was headed in the right direction. Ms. Figat encouraged him to not only refine his vision, but to also meet with an attorney prior to signing a contract with the manufacturer. She advised that he keep moving forward with the loan process. Maurice Curtis is confirmation that entrepreneurs are risk takers while seeking opportunities and jumping on them. DCED continues to work with Maurice every step of the way!

Use of Food Business Incubator Center at DCED Assists Food Companies to Grow

Outline of Need:
DCED recognized that small food businesses needed a low-cost kitchen where they could prepare food for events and to produce foods for sale.

How DCED Helped:
DCED appealed to its many supporters; funding was provided, and DCED opened the Food Business Incubator Center (FBIC). The Center is managed by DCED in collaboration with DSU?s Hospitality and Tourism Management Department. DCED?s mission for the Food Business Incubator Center is to nurture, support, and sustain food and agricultural industries in the Delaware region by providing business and technical training, resources for product and process evaluation and incubation, and a trusted source for information and guidance.

Since the opening of the Center, DCED has been reaching out to caterers, specialty food producers, farmers and cart vendors that handle food. Services being offered include: business development, product and process development, equipment use training, regulations and compliance support, market research and strategy, and workforce development and training.

The Results:
Many small business owners have been utilizing the services offered by the FBIC. Pamela Rutherford manufactures dog biscuits. Ms. Rutherford is the owner of Skipper?s Biscuit

Company and states that she ?is proud to be a participant and the kitchen provided us a stepping stone to take our business to the next level by giving us the opportunity to manufacture in a commercial kitchen that was clean, equipped with an expansive variation of modern appliances, and the usage fees didn?t eat up our budget.? Ms. Rutherford continues by saying, ?We are lucky to have such a professional facility so close to home!?

Orville and Cheryl Carney are the proud owners of An Affair to Remember, a catering service. The Carney?s state, ?the use of the commercial kitchen combined with the eager assistance of your staff has helped make one of our goals come to life ? a full service catering company. We found that your Center had more to offer than a full service commercial kitchen with restaurant quality equipment. The staff also provided us with training on such things as food safety and product labeling while showing enthusiasm about the Center.? Cheryl shares that not only did they realize their goals, but the resources offered by DCED has encouraged them to try things they would never thought possible.

Small companies such as these are being serviced by DCED with the use of the FBIC. The FBIC continues to provide superior services including dry and cold storage. The users also have access to DCED?s computers, printers, fax, copier, labeling software, and a variety of other office equipment. The goal is to lead companies to self-sufficiency with independent business establishments.

Assists Winner of First Annual Business Plan Competition for Family Child Care Providers

Outline of Need:
In the Spring of 2007, it was recognized that family child care providers are often intimidated about creating a business plan. The Delaware Center for Enterprise Development (DCED) and its partners, such as the First State Community Loan Fund (FSCLF), announced the first annual state-wide business plan competition for family child care providers. Citigroup then provided $10,000 to be divided among the five best plans written by family child care

providers.

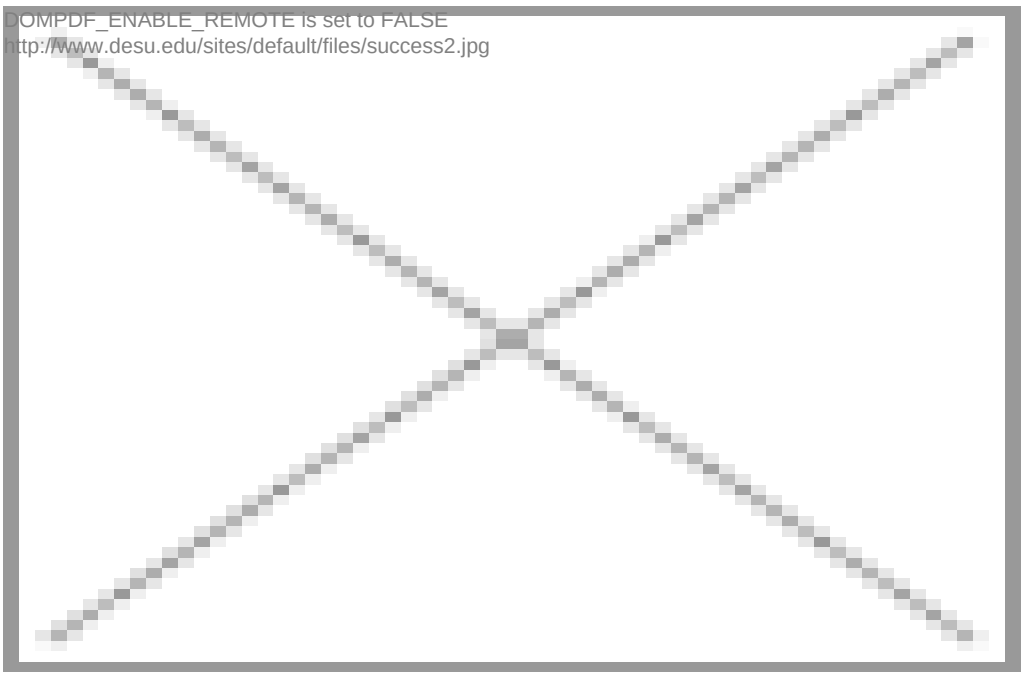
Mrs. Sarah Reyes, a family child care provider in the Wilmington area reached out to Ilona Figat, Enterprise Consultant for assistance. Ilona met with Sarah at her home and was quite impressed with the layout of the family child care setting and the fact that Ms. Reyes encouraged bi-lingual activities. Although, Mrs. Reyes was apprehensive about tackling such a huge undertaking, Ilona assured her that she would not only write a plan, but that she believed Sarah could be a winner.

How DCED Helped:
After Ilona?s initial visit to Wilmington, she and Sarah communicated almost daily. They talked by phone and sometimes very late at night or very early in the morning when the children were not present. And, Sarah would e-mail Ilona sections of her plan as she completed them. This system seemed to work best.

At one point, Sarah was becoming discouraged, since she was not only writing her business plan, but she was also enrolled in Child Development courses at Delaware Technical Community College. Sarah felt it was a challenge to complete all the required components; but Ilona kept encouraging her to complete it.

The Results:
The completed business plans had to be sent electronically and reach the First State Community Loan Fund?s office by April 30, 2007. In the early hours of the deadline date, Sarah transmitted her plan. She made the deadline! Then, on June 12, 2007, DCED and its partners celebrated with many family child care applicants at a reception held at Delaware State University in the College of Business at the Dover Campus. After dinner was served, many providers and their families, along with technical assistance representatives from partnering agencies throughout the state, were awaiting to hear the names of the five winners. Sarah?s perseverance paid off. She was one of the winners and she received a check for $2,000. Not only did Sarah accomplish a tremendous task by completing her business plan, she also completed her courses at the Community College. She and Ilona keep in touch and whenever Sarah has a question, she knows that Ilona is there to help her. Anyone interested in technical assistance to help with completing their business plans can call Ilona at 302-857-6953

Assists Small Business Owners Within the Community



Outline of Need:
Mary and John Walson began meeting with Ilona Figat, Enterprise Consultant in April, 2007. The goal was to complete a business plan for their small business, Collars to Cuffs, a sewing shop that ?fits? all needs. In other words, Mary designs outfits and showpieces to not only fit the non-typical body shape, but she also creates one-of-a-kind garments for her customers.

While in California, Mary worked for several Designers. One particular designer recognized Mary?s talent and encouraged her to go to school. That?s exactly what she did, and she graduated with a Degree in Fashion and Art from the College of Alameda.

Now, Mary was equipped to make patterns in the design rooms she was accustomed to working in. That was not enough, she wanted to do more. She opened a shop in California and for five years she was making custom dresses, designing patterns and doing alterations.

Mary needed to move back east in order to care for her ill mother. She took a break from sewing, but not for long. Once in Delaware, Mary began doing alterations and DESIGNING CLOTHES ONCE AGAIN. In January, 2007, she and her husband, John, opened *Collars to Cuffs*. In other words, they can design anything from head to toe!

Mary is the creator of fashion and John is in charge of time management, scheduling the clients, and handling the business aspects of the shop. This couple has what it takes to run a successful business. They have the passion, desire, determination and know how.

The couple is very thankful for Ilona?s assistance in helping them to complete their business plan; and feel that it has helped them recognize the direction they want to take with their business.

How DCED Helped:
Mary?s newest vision is teaching custom dressmaking to persons interested in learning the skill, and then hosting a fashion show to highlight the finished products.

A concern has been whether there is a market in the little state of Delaware for learning this area of expertise. So, once Ilona established the Small Business Institute® (SBI), in the

College of Business, at Delaware State University, she met with John and Mary, and Dr. Nanda Viswanathan, a professor teaching Marketing in the MBA program. The MBA students then met with the Walsons to assess the marketing needs of the new venture.

The Results:
Seven weeks later, a marketing plan was developed; and the students presented it to the Walsons on May 1st. Once again, the Walsons are thrilled with the assistance they have received from the Delaware Center for Enterprise Development. Without the assistance from DCED and the students involved with the SBI, the Walsons aren?t sure they would have been able to launch their new venture. Now, Mary meets on Saturdays with a group of persons learning custom dressmaking and plans are being made for the fashion show to be held in the fall.

You can visit John and Mary at their new location at 44 Evergreen Drive, Dover, DE. The Shop is opened from 10 to 6 Monday through Friday, and by appointment on the weekends and in the evenings by calling 302-678-7125.

Assists Owner of Cross Fit Dover

Outline of Need:
In January of 2007, Mr. George Dobbins met with Ilona Figat, Enterprise Consultant to discuss his dream of opening his own CrossFit location. While exploring the ins and outs of starting a business, George knew he needed to begin writing his business plan.

CrossFit Dover is for those persons interested in fitness. But, according to George, ?while working out at CrossFit, people can expect to increase their core strength and conditioning through a variety of functional exercise.? George has the passion for motivating his participants by often challenging them to fight through their pain. While the CrossFit members are working with George, he tries to fit in as much as he can into the hour session.

George is a hard worker, and he doesn?t mind working long hours. His challenge was to find other folks like him that would appreciate the concept of CrossFit. A marketing plan was needed and the challenge was to distinguish his exercise program from those of the competitors.

How DCED Helped:
George was sharing space with a local gym. He was sure he would have a following if he ventured out on his own. He just needed to find an affordable space, dedicate many hours to marketing the concept, and begin generating revenue.

George met with Ilona on a weekly basis. He created a business plan; and he and Ilona worked together to develop not only a marketing plan, but also a pricing schedule that would create revenue and profits for the young entrepreneur. By March of 2007, George was in his own place and members of the community were frequenting his establishment. His dream became a reality.

The Results:
The challenge was to get the people to join. In just listening to George, Ilona felt that once the member would join, he would be hooked. Today, CrossFit Dover is up and thriving. George is devoted to his members and he wants them all to reach their goals. He develops an exercise

portfolio to meet each member?s needs. He believes Word of Mouth has been his most successful marketing strategy. George appreciates the importance of excellent customer service, and once he opened his doors, he knew that he would want to expand. In order to make it on his own, he needed to generate enough profit. So far, he is doing just that.

Recently, George was highlighted in a local newspaper for the work he was doing with a local pregnant woman ? nine months pregnant! She was performing overhead squats with free weights, squat thrusts, and other exercises; and later that day, she was scheduled for a Caesarian section.

CrossFit Dover is located in Camden, Delaware and George can be reached by calling 302-242-5400.

A Touch of New Orleans Goes a Long Way in Delaware

Cajun Queens Catering Services have been catering for the Delaware Center for Enterprise Development (DCED) and other state agencies since her graduation from the Entrepreneurial Program. The owner, Sandra Winfrey not only caters the affairs, but also she has also served as the keynote speaker on occasion..

Ms. Winfrey started her business twelve years ago when she saw an ad for the Entrepreneurial Success Course offered by DCED. She immediately signed up and says that ?the benefits of taking that class has helped my business to grow by 300%.?

Sandra initially started her business with her sister and notes that most of her business is through word-of-mouth. She is proud of the fact that she spends very little money on advertising. She knows that referrals are the key and she set high standards when she first started out and still follows those standards today. She is always on time, offers excellent quality, pays attention to details and provides a little more (?lanyap?) New Orleans style.

She attributes her success on the information she learned by taking the Entrepreneurial Success Course. She states: ?I learned the things to avoid, and that my paperwork needs to be in order. Additionally, I became knowledgeable in accounting principles, how to price my products and customer service techniques.? Ms Winfrey adds, ?Who would have thought that doing something I love would bring me such a sense of achievement. I tell everyone, "Go after your Dreams and don?t let anyone discourage you. If I could do it, anyone can.?

Entrepreneurial Course Graduates Highlight Niche Product

Gary and Nancy Petitt, graduates of DCED?s Entrepreneurial Success Course are sprouting their chestnuts in a Delmarvelous way; and the Delmarvelous Chestnuts are gaining national notoriety. The Kent County, Delaware couple was highlighted in Southern Living Magazine, Food Finds, a TV show on the Food Network, the News Journal, Wilmington DE Today, and the Hobby Farms Magazine.

Gary and Nancy own a 30-acre chestnut orchard in Townsend, DE and sell chestnuts,

seedlings and chestnut gift items. After graduating from the Entrepreneurial Success Course, they expanded their idea of selling chestnuts and created a website, www.delmarvelouschestnuts.com [1]. The couple harvest bushels of chestnuts every fall, shipping Delmarvelous Chestnuts all over the nation.

In the early 20th century, chestnuts were very scarce. One-fourth of the chestnut trees in the Appalachian forests were hit by an Asian fungus, called chestnut blight; and within 40 years, in excess of 3 billion chestnut trees were wiped out. Luckily for chestnut lovers, many of the roots survived and began sending up sprouts that made breeding work possible; and that is what Nancy & Gary are doing. They planted over 1,600 trees and are successfully resurrecting the supply of homegrown chestnuts. In fact, Delmarvelous Chestnuts ranks as one of the top five commercial growers in the U.S

While the couple was enrolled in the Entrepreneurial course, the instructors emphasized finding a niche product. The Petitts have certainly succeeded in finding their niche. They sell the seedlings in the spring; and they sell out of chestnuts in record time in the fall.

If you are interested in learning more about this successful couple, you can send an e-mail to nancy@buychestnuts.com [2] or see their website at www.delmarvelouschestnuts.com [1].

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Links:
[1] http://www.delmarvelouschestnuts.com/
[2] mailto:nancy@buychestnuts.com