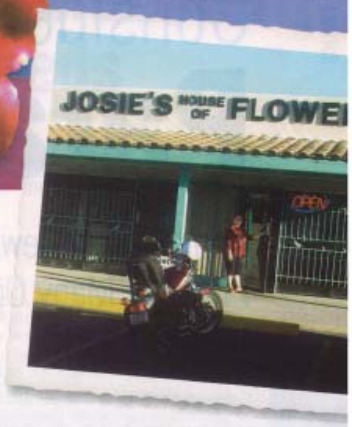
From a Dream to Reality

by Joe Dolan

Tucsonan gets help from PCC turning idea into a successful start-up business



Small business owners know that when you combine a well-written business plan with a passion to follow your dreams, good things can happen. For Josie Gin Morgan, owner of Josie's House of Flowers, L.L.C., her dream of opening up a flower shop where customers can order from anywhere in the world on the Internet has flourished into a rapidly growing and successful local business.

"I did a lot of investigating and research before I decided to start up my own business," says the longtime El Rio Neighborhood resident. "When I found out about the help offered at the Pima Community College Small Business Development Center, I was really excited."

Josie is among the hundreds of people in Southern Arizona who have benefited from the SBDC's no cost and low cost workshops, consultation, and advising services designed to make small business owners and entrepreneurs think strategically about their ideas and the way they run their businesses.

"The staff at the SBDC are phenomenal. After going to some workshops on the basics of starting and running a business, I made the decision to take a step forward in turning my dream into a reality," she says.

"The SBDC challenged me to develop a detailed business plan that kept me focused. It forced me to think about my competitors and define what I wanted to do and how I could get there."

Josie's House of Flowers opened in 2006 in an old adobe building that used to be a grocery store on the West Side of Tucson. The property has been part of the family for generations. That, along with a large percentage of her business transactions completed online, has kept overhead and other costs down.

Josie's keeps growing thanks to a good product, strong reputation in the community, and a solid business plan from the start. The shop has expanded to a more visible location at 1221 W. Speedway Boulevard to attract foot traffic. The move has proven to be profitable and has allowed Josie's to diversify its customer base.

"I was hesitant to expand," she admits. "But the SBDC gave me a reality check that I needed more of a physical presence in the community. Since opening up the new store, business has tripled from walk-in customers."

With four part-time employees, Josie's is looking to hire a full-time florist to keep up with orders. Some of her busiest times of the year come during graduation and the holidays.

"To be a good florist, you have to know your customers and be a good listener," she says. "But to run a successful business, you have to know how to manage your books and keep up with the ins and outs of the operation. The one-on-one consultations and advice I got from the SBDC has been invaluable in helping me understand that." CF

Find out if starting up a business is right for you

Contact the PCC Small Business Development Center

(520) 206-6404 or www.pima.edu/business