

Small Business Success Snapshot



Debbie Brown, *Serial Entrepreneur!*

Small Business Development
Center at Treasure Valley
Community College

Tim and Debbie Brown started their lives together in 1978 on their farm in Nyssa, Oregon. Tim's parents raised buffalo on their place as a hobby. In 1983 Tim's parents retired from farming and Tim & Debbie took over their farm and the buffalo. In 1985 Debbie painted and posted the first **Brown's Buffalo Ranch** sign at the bottom of the road in Nyssa. A few years later the low fat, leaner meat health craze took hold.

Debbie recognized that there was a growing market for their Buffalo meat. In 1988 she started to heavily market the health aspect of the Buffalo meat and focused on the local restaurants. In 1992 they started **Brown's Chuck Wagon**, a mobile facility that allowed them to cater private events, auctions, go to county fairs,

and other public gatherings to sell their Buffalo Burgers and Indian Tacos.

Both businesses were quite successful, but early in 1999 Debbie recognized the need to expand their marketing and their services. She contacted the TVCC BizCenter about developing a Marketing Plan. After meeting with BizCenter Advisor, Debi DeBord, the Brown's decided to expand their marketing to restaurants in Boise, McCall and Sun Valley, ID and also to schools, rest homes and hospitals. DeBord met with the Brown's at their Ranch to develop their marketing plan using the BizCenter's lap top computer.

In December of 2000 Debbie contacted the BizCenter again to discuss her interest in forming a cooperative with other bison producers to



*Debbie Brown, Serial Entrepreneur, currently co-owns and operates **four** small businesses. Her newest venture being **Cookie Art from the Heart**, Cookie Bouquets for all occasions.*

better take full control of their product line. Long term, the profitability of this business is in having the slaughter facility and processing their own products and selling those products themselves.

The Brown's worked closely with BizCenter Advisors Andrea Testi and Gary Clark, researching the feasibility of purchasing a meat packing plant in Nampa and opening a retail space. During this time they also registered for



and attended the NxLevel class, offered by the BizCenter and taught by Andrea. Debbie wanted a refresher in business management and wanted to make sure she was taking everything into consideration when making this decision to expand.

Seeking financing for purchasing this business and making the necessary renovations, was a critical part of their strategy. Many of the United States Small Business Administration Loan Programs were reviewed for compatibility with their financing needs. Ultimately, the Brown's and their business partners agreed on an investor, self-financed cooperative business operation.

In August of 2001 the Brown's and their business partners purchased the USDA Certified, **Northwest Premium Meats, LLC** Debbie took over as plant manager and opened a retail store in the front of the facilities.

By the end of 2003 Debi was ready to move on to yet another business venture. Tim was taking over managing the plant and enjoying it. Debbie started looking into the possibilities of becoming a personal chef,



Each cookie is hand decorated and individually wrapped for freshness.

since she really enjoyed cooking.

Debbie also recognized the need to diversify their investments. She felt that it was not good to have all of the time and money tied up in the Buffalo business. In the Fall of 2005 Debbie created and started **Cookie Art**.

As a child Debbie can remember her grandmother spending days baking for family and friends as holidays drew near. She could hardly wait for those wonderful cookies to come out of her oven. Debbie continued in her grandmother's footsteps, baking those special holiday cookies for her family. And now, she's taken that tradition one step further.

Each "Cookie Art" creation is personalized for her customers. All you

need is the occasion to remember and she'll deliver the memory...from "thinking of you" to "Happy Holidays."

Debbie creates and sells individually decorated bouquets, large pan cookies, and assorted gourmet gift boxes for all occasions.

Once Debbie decided that she was going to start **Cookie Art** she contacted the BizCenter looking for assistance in marketing and pricing.

Cookie Art has been open and operating for six months and has developed a steady and growing clientele.

If you ask Debbie why she felt the need to start another business, she will tell you "I have always enjoyed making cookies for family and friends on the holidays. I have reached a burn out stage on marketing the products I have produced for the last 27 years and now the opportunity has come for me to do something for myself."

Debbie credits her success as a "serial entrepreneur" to her ability to jump in feet first. She says that she has never been afraid to jump in and try something new. She does her homework

and researches each business venture before she starts. Once she has determined that it is a solid business idea she does not hesitate.

The TVCC BizCenter team systematically distributes client success stories to all local media, including newspaper, radio and the college newsletter. The BizCenter has a regular spot on KSRV AM 1380 talk radio, on which the success stories are discussed and promoted on air by radio announcer, Carl Follick.

Cookie Art



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The BizCenter team never knows exactly what to expect when Debbie calls; however, we do know that it will be a well thought out idea with lots of fun involved for all !!

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"The BizCenter is partially funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SBA's funding is not an endorsement of any products, opinions, or services. All SBA funded programs are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Special arrangements for handicapped individuals will be made if requested in advance. Contact Treasure Valley Community College BizCenter, 650 College Blvd, 541-881-8822 x 356."

