

Becky's Blissful Bakery Boasts Recipe for Success



You know your food business has arrived when high-end gourmet giant Williams-Sonoma agrees to feature your wares in its highly esteemed catalog and online offerings.

For Rebecca Scarberry, owner of Becky's Blissful Bakery, the Williams-Sonoma deal couldn't be sweeter. The once struggling entrepreneur has just landed a partnering agreement with the premier food purveyor while maintaining her commitment to the local community that helped get her business started.

Rebecca started Becky's Blissful Bakery as a hobby, selling her organic,

homemade caramels at a local market and chocolate shop in Waukesha, WI, in 2007. Her hobby took on greater proportions when Rebecca went through a divorce and simultaneously was suddenly laid off from her full-time position at a local architecture firm. She rented a kiosk at a nearby mall, selling her caramels during the weekend before Christmas. In 2009, she started selling caramels at a local farmers market. A feature article about the company sent sales soaring, and soon Rebecca was faced with a critical decision: take a full-time position offered to her after an

exhaustive job search, or go full throttle on her business. After three months at the full-time job, she decided to quit and focus on the latter.

To facilitate her decision, Rebecca attended a FaSTart Business Workshop offered by the Small Business Center at Waukesha County Technical College. "I wasn't from the area, had no network, and knew nothing about running a company," says Rebecca. "I signed up for the workshop to learn the ins and outs of starting a business."

With help from the center's manager Russ Roberts, Rebecca obtained an Early



Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Entrepreneur's Network (WEN). The grant enabled her to hire a local business consultant to assist her in developing a business plan. A WCTC graphic design student created the bakery's logo and labels, and Rebecca ramped up the business, expanding her presence in area retail outlets and partnering with other local and regional high-end food businesses.

"The Small Business Center became my business's lifeline for information, connections, and resources," says Rebecca. "I can't say enough about the people there who have become like family to me."

The Small Business Center at WCTC is unique, says Russ Roberts. "We take a very à la carte approach to providing the courses and support services that entrepreneurs like Rebecca need," he says. "Beyond the business courses and services we offer, we emphasize the real world side of entrepreneurship and try to expose students to the knowledge and experiences of practicing professionals in the community."

The lessons learned at WCTC's Small Business Center were critical to getting Rebecca's business off the ground. In addition to business planning and management, she obtained advice and mentoring from a host of community business leaders who offer their services through the center.

In 2010, Rebecca purchased new equipment and moved into renovated space in Pewaukee. The move wasn't without sacrifices. She had to sell her minivan to pay for the renovations and hire a consultant when her caramel started to crystallize unexpectedly, causing her to make changes to her recipe and cooking processes -- changes that were critical to success. Since that move, Becky's Blissful Bakery has continued to thrive. Most recently, Rebecca received a major order from a specialty promotions company in Beverly Hills.

Currently, Becky's Blissful Bakery employs three full-time employees and several part-timers. Rebecca remains faithful to her original business model of using only high quality, organic products and incorporating offerings from local businesses. "People ask why I still sell product at the farmer's market," says Rebecca. "I get real time, true feedback, and I get to stay connected to the community, which is huge. For a small business, once you pull that plug, it changes everything."

Rebecca now teaches a course at the Small Business Center on how to start a food business, sharing her own experiences with hopeful entrepreneurs. She attributes her success to the contributions of partners and individuals in the community, her hard work and timing, and the support of WCTC's Small Business Center. "Everything happens for a reason," she says. And, now that she's had a taste of success, nothing could be sweeter -- except for just maybe the mouth-watering, hand-made caramels from Becky's Blissful Bakery.

WCTC SMALL BUSINESS CENTER - MAKING IT REAL

Rebecca Scarberry is a shining star of the WCTC Small Business Center, but the center's manager, Russ Roberts, isn't taking any credit.

"The best we can do is to provide a foundation of knowledge and place a wide net of support services around our entrepreneur clients," says Russ. "However, the difference between success and failure always hinges on the amount of hard work, passion and determination each entrepreneur brings to the table. Rebecca is a success because she recognized very early what sacrifices she had to make to succeed!"

Students at the center can take any number of courses, but there is a heavy emphasis on real world, non-credit offerings to choose from. Support services are comprehensive and include the "Take a Professional to Lunch Program," "Success Mentoring," and "Business Plan Express." Our FaSTart Workshop is very specific," says Russ. "Students gain useful business knowledge quickly, learning everything new business owners need to know."

The center's courses are short and topic specific and are tailored to meet the needs of busy people. Non-credit classes are available for entrepreneurs during semester breaks and at other non-traditional times so they can get help when they need it. A former Naval aviator and financial planning firm owner, Russ took the helm at the center 11 years ago when entrepreneurship was a very "part-time" focus at WCTC. Since that time he has shown his skill in charting new territory. During the first year of operation, the center served about 150 students; today it serves close to 1,500.

"We like to go beyond the coursework to help students solve a problem so they can move on to the next step," he says. "We emphasize networking and mentoring because our students want knowledge from real-world professionals who practice what they preach."