



Helping To Build A New America

Non Profit For Immigrant Businesses



By Jessica Aguirre

Feb. 19 - KGO - Starting a business is a difficult endeavor for anyone, but it's especially challenging for immigrants new to this country, and even more so for women who often face additional barriers. A Bay Area non profit is working to change those odds by helping new Americans hone their business skills.

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It is cooking day for Cecilia Lopez and that means stirring up the past, to help pave the way for her future.

Cecilia Lopez: "In my country, I could never dream of having something with my name on it."

For decades Cecilia has been recreating her mother's traditional Mexican salsa for loved ones -- but she never imagined that salsa would be her salvation

Cecilia Lopez: "I like to make salsa, and sell salsa and I have more money, for me and my children."

Cecilia has taken her family recipe and bottled it. With the help of the Berkeley based non- profit "AnewAmerica" -- Cecilia is a new entrepreneur, and the proud creator of 'Cecilia's Salsa.'

Census numbers show that there is a rise in the number of immigrant-owned businesses, especially among women. A lot of immigrants, like Cecilia, have the talent and the determination to start their own business. But for women it can be especially hard -- often in this country alone, supporting children they just don't have the extra cash to invest into a business.

Sylvia Rosales-Fike, AnewAmerica founder: "Our mission is to help and empower new Americans with economic, social and political opportunities in this country."

AnewAmerica accomplishes that goal with a three year business planning program that teaches immigrants, like Cecilia, how to start a business from the ground up -- everything from financial management and marketing to computer literacy.

Sylvia Rosales-Fike: "Business coaches, that are part of our program, come and help each man or each woman entrepreneur to create a specialty business plan. They show you how to implement all the different aspects that require you to launch the business."

Sylvia Rosales-Fike says clients earn credits, college certificates and even more valuable on the job training in a variety of business incubators created by AnewAmerica.

Cecilia first began adding her salsa as a side dish at AnewAmerica's Green Bananas Café, on the campus of Holy Names University in Oakland. Cecilia now manages the cafe and her salsa is now prominently displayed and sold. Proof, says Rosales Fykes that the American dream of economic self sufficiency is attainable to newcomers.

Sylvia Rosales Fykes: "If you really work on your dream, this country is the country of opportunities, and organizations like AnewAmerica are just facilitating that process and opening the doors."

As for Cecilia, the future looks delicioso.

Sylvia Rosales-Fike: "Cecilia is going to own her own Green Bananas Cafe one day, she's getting there -- and her salsas will be in the market."

AnewAmerica is funded by private and government funds, revenue from its own businesses as well, but it also asks clients going thru the three year program to make a symbolic financial investment in their training.

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