

OXNARD BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY: MASTER'S DONUTS



Success is Sweet:

Michelle Senna relocated her donut store in Oxnard to make room for larger corporate stores moving into the shopping center. With the help of the Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County and the city of Oxnard, Senna overcame the change and is drawing more traffic into her store and competing with the national brands next door.

EMERGING ENTREPRENEUR

As a teenager, Michelle Senna lived in a refugee camp during Cambodia's brutal regime controlled by Pol Pot. During that time, she lost her brother, sister and grandmother. In 1981, she and her family relocated to Camarillo under the sponsorship of St. Columba's Episcopal Church.

Her parents secured jobs, but their entrepreneurial spirit came out when they took over a Four Seasons Donut store in Camarillo. Working at her parents' store, Senna learned how to run a business and discovered her own entrepreneurial spirit.

In 1987, she and her partners purchased a Foster's Donut franchise in Oxnard. She and her husband, Eric, now own it outright and have changed the name to Master's Donuts.

"We're hoping to work with the EDC-VC and the city of Oxnard again with our future expansion plans," said Senna.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

The city of Oxnard and Senna's landlord worked together to update the strip mall where Master's Donuts is located, turning it into a contemporary shopping center with higher foot traffic. At the beginning of the renovation, Senna was concerned because she relocated her store within the center and because Lowe's and several national food chains were opening there.

She enlisted the help of the EDC-VC to help with marketing through the transition. Small Business Development Center advisor Rose-Lise Obetz worked with Senna to expand her menu to include grill items and soft-serve ice cream. Obetz also helped with website design, marketing efforts and connecting Senna with a chef to create new recipes.

"Rose played an integral role in spearheading our expansion," said Eric, who oversees much of the company's marketing and sales efforts. "She got us in touch with a lot of industry and community experts, who were key to our success."

BELIEVE IN YOUR OWN SUCCESS

Senna continues to take her entrepreneurial efforts to new levels.

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1601 Carmen Drive, Suite 215
Camarillo, CA 93010
805-384-1800, www.edc-vc.com



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