

If you *Believe* in yourself *Anything* is possible



CHATHAM UNIVERSITY

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER

AT THE CENTER FOR WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

“Phenomenal.
So empowering.”

Earlier this year, Chatham's Women's Business Center (CWBC), part of the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship (CWE) at Chatham University, was selected by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as the 2018 Women's Business Center of the Year. We look at why.

By Cara Gillotti

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the SBA district office invited CWE to apply for a five-year grant to start a Women's Business Center. "It was a great opportunity—though we had been offering events including training and networking, we hadn't been able to offer formal one-on-one counseling services," says CWBC Director Anne Flynn Schlicht, MBS.

In April 2016, they won the grant. Since then, the CWBC has:

- Offered 101 training programs, serving over 1410 women entrepreneurs with 217 training hours
- Provided 987 hours of counseling to 468 clients, which has directly contributed to 82 new businesses and \$3.8M in raised capital

"We've exceeded our goals each year we've operated, which is what I think led to us getting the award. The Administration was impressed with the amount of training and counseling we do and also our metrics in terms of business starts and access to capital," says Schlicht.

MISSION

The CWBC works across Pittsburgh and throughout Allegheny and surrounding counties. Counselors offer programming and counseling at the CWBC office at Chatham Eastside, and meet with clients and organizations in neighborhoods including Wilkinsburg, the Hill District, the North Side. Their mission is to serve especially women in underserved communities, such as minorities and immigrants.

Along with one-on-one business counseling, the CWBC offers six-week entrepreneurial training programs; half-day workshops; webinars; and seminars on topics including financing a business, digital marketing, traditional marketing, accounting, exporting, certification, legal issues, hiring employees, veteran business ownership, and business startup, growth, and new product/service development.

"Entrepreneurs need not just money to start their business, but also to grow it, and that's one of the biggest barriers for women," says Schlicht. "Their businesses are often more service-based, so they might not have access to collateral. One of the aims of the SBA is that all businesses need access to capital to grow. That means they'll hire people, create jobs, put more money back into the economy."

A look at a few clients of the CWBC...



CAROLYN KLASNICK BROOKS

Partner & Executive Producer at Post Script Productions LLC

Established: 2010

www.postscriptproductions.com and www.postscriptfilms.com

Carolyn Klasnick Brooks founded her company in 2010 with her partner Michelle Hammerbacher the year after she graduated from college. "We went to a restaurant, drew on a napkin, and that was our logo," she laughs. A networking connection suggested that they look into the Women's Business Center, where she met CWE Executive Director Rebecca Harris. "I was just blown away," she says. "That woman has so much energy, the nonstop thinking, the brain always moving." Brooks became a member of the CWE, began attending the breakfast series, and participated in the eight-week business growth workshop. "I've been part of more traditional networking groups, but they don't focus so much on continuing education," she says. "The CWBC brings in speakers, and our business sponsored a coffee hour, hosted at our offices. It gave me an opportunity to showcase my business and allowed me to connect with women in a different way."

Among the things that the CWBC helped Brooks with was getting her business designated a Certified Woman-Owned Disadvantaged Business Enterprise by the Pennsylvania Unified Certification program. "It was very paperwork-intensive, and I had to be very organized!" she says. "You can't really think of another place where you can get what you can get (at CWBC). It's a unique organization."

KELLY CARNEY '96

owner of *Eva Bryn Shoetique*

Established: 2018

evabrynshoetique.com

Auspiciously, Kelly Carney was inspired to start her shoe boutique while living in Dollar, a village in Scotland, to which she and her family had temporarily relocated for her husband's career. "One of my dear friends there owned a shoe shop, and she took me under her wing," Carney says. The friend introduced Carney to vendors, and when her family returned to Pittsburgh, Carney looked to the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship to help with the business end.

Carney attended the "Concept to Launch" class. "You've got 32 women with 32 business ideas. It's great to know all these other people who also want to do something, but also don't know how to do it," she says. "We soaked up as much as we could."

"The most important thing is that you're surrounded with strong, independent, powerful women. You really have no choice but to be inspired. Going there changed my life."

In nine months, Eva Bryn Shoetique went from an idea to a storefront in Zelienople, PA, with a soft opening held on September 7. Carney credits the CWBC. "Phenomenal," she says. "So empowering." She says that she will continue to draw on the resources of the CWBC as she takes her business online.



ELSA SANTOS

owner of *Azorean Cafe*

Established: 2018

azoreancafe.com

Elsa Santos moved to the U.S. 17 years ago from Portugal's Azores Islands. She had spent years working in management in the coffee industry, but always dreamed of having her own business. Five years ago, she and her family moved to Pittsburgh, and she felt it was time.

Santos worked part-time jobs in restaurants to learn the business firsthand while working on her business plan for the Azorean Café. She came across the CWBC while researching how to get involved with women's entrepreneurship, and it was a perfect fit.

"The CWBC has helped me so much," she says. "I got my attorney and my HR company through them, and I did the class on how to develop a website. It seems like whatever you need, they can suggest someone who can help with it. It's been very good."

"The institutions that we need to help us have a hard time accepting that a woman by herself can succeed in such a big project," Santos continues. "I've seen the difference when my husband is present. The restaurant industry is hard enough as it is; being a female doesn't help. But that's why we're here, to prove the opposite." ▀

