Helping businesses start, grow, and prosper.
From the State Director

Looking back over 2022, I can’t help but be overwhelmed by the many accomplishments of this network. Over the course of the year, we initiated and completed a number of key projects, including the launch of our new PASBDC website, and an overhaul of our internal communications platform. Our Lead Office staff resumed travel to our centers, and traversed the Commonwealth to meet with clients and hear their stories, many of which you will find on the following pages.

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The continued efforts of our team are nothing short of incredible. 2022 has been a year of growth, change, focus, and collaboration. Each and every team member should be proud of their contributions to the network and to the small business community.

From innovative programming in our Centers of Excellence, to renewed work on internal communications and processes, to growing outreach to small businesses and creativity in sharing their stories – our commitment to the small businesses in PA is represented once again in our exceeding of all metrics and goals for the current year.

The issues our small business clients continue to face are many. The need for digital presence and strategy, solutions to supply chain disruption, and strategies to combat employee hiring and retention issues are some of the most significant factors that small businesses are considering in the current economic environment. It is inspiring to see the small businesses in our community start, grow, and pivot to reach their goals. Thank you to our clients for letting us have a front-row view of your successes and for allowing us to amplify your concerns, ideas, interests, and stories in the business community.

We could not make this impact without the support of our partners, host institutions, and our funders. Thanks to all who made this year one to remember!
The Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers network has helped start and expand businesses, create jobs, offer educational workshops, and provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with the knowledge needed to make smart decisions and prosper.

Numbers on paper tend to fail to capture the scope of achievements, but the following infographics may help to visualize the many successes attributed to the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers for the fiscal year.
Capital Acquired (All Sources)

- Veterans: $38,297,360.00
- Women Clients: $558,272,135.79
- Minority Clients (Includes Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Clients): $587,169,213.06
- Other Clients (White Male, Non-Veterans): $116,260,468.85

Number of Clients

- Business Starts: 401
- Consulting Hours: 2,146
- Jobs Supported: 4,461

Jobs Supported By

- Veterans: 26,353.68
- Women Clients: 20,999.99
- Minority Clients (Includes Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Clients): 6,377.64
- Other Clients (White Male, Non-Veterans): 43,105.11

Performance Measurements (Outputs)

- Jobs Supported: 68,675
- Number of Clients: 13,718
- Number of New Business Starts: 719

Top 10 Industries Served

1. Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
2. Educational Services
3. Construction
4. Health Care and Social Assistance
5. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
6. Arts and Entertainment
7. Accommodation and Food Services
8. Manufacturer or Producer
9. Retail Trade
10. Service Establishment

Performance Measurements (Outcomes)

- Consulting Training: 1,269
- Other: 3,232
- Educational Services: 271
- Real Estate, Rental and Leasing: 1,629
- Manufacturing or Producer: 879
- Retail Trade: 618
- Service Establishment: 561
- Arts and Entertainment: 561
- Health Care and Social Assistance: 468
- Construction: 323

Total Training Attendees: 16,193
Total Training Sessions: 911
“The SBDC is a must have to any business, big or small, for all the right information to build any size business. Thank you for all you do!”

Kenn Starr, President of Starr Hill Vineyard & Winery

“A tremendous thank you to the Wilkes University SBDC for their help as it pertains to the technical assistance and consulting from their Center!”

Jonathan Benjamin, CEO of Unity Laundry Systems Corporation

“I wanted to know I was doing it the right way, and I appreciated the structure the SBDC provided as I started my business.”

Phoebe Heath, Owner of Anthracite Creative Works

“Thank you, wouldn’t have been able to do it without your assistance”

Emily Malse, Owner of The Wellness Community

“With Dan’s guidance, I was able to write a business plan, financial projections, and have a greater understanding of how to operate a successful small business.”

Dan Parra, Owner of The Isle Surf and Skate Shop

THANK YOU to our Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers for your dedication to our clients!
Thanks to the guidance provided by Widener SBDC, we were able to establish our business model and prepare financial projections that helped us align our prices with the market rates.

Maria Monica Molina, CEO of Innovech Software LLC

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Karen Paradine, Owner of The Colonialist Spot

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Our success depends on the success of our clients. These are their stories.
SBA EASTERN PA DISTRICT
FAMILY-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Susquehanna Fire Equipment Company

In 1951, Max Foust Sr. started the Susquehanna Fire Equipment Company selling fire extinguishers out of a garage. Over the last 70 years the company has grown and now proudly provides the most innovative and advanced fire, safety, and suppression equipment and services available to protect lives and property. Today Keith Foust, the 3rd successful generation of ownership, serves as President and leads a firm with 33 employees and two locations.

Throughout those generations, the company has endured numerous challenges but nothing could have prepared them for the impacts of COVID-19. In March 2020, business as usual was abruptly extinguished; sales declined severely and layoffs were imminent. As one of the longest-term clients of the Bucknell SBDC – Keith will proudly recall the single-digit “client number” assigned to Susquehanna Fire Equipment Company decades ago – he knew exactly where to turn for help. He reached out to the center for assistance learning about and securing COVID-19 relief funds.

Keith and his team worked quickly and closely with the SBDC as they applied to the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan program (EIDL). The company was soon approved for funding through both programs and every employee was happy to report for duty – even if it meant working in new positions and changed conditions than before the pandemic.

By May of that year, Keith began to see a clearing through the smoke and business slowly began to recover. Keith and his team are grateful for the SBDC, and especially for the EIDL program and both rounds of PPP funding that helped Susquehanna Fire Equipment Company survive the flames of the pandemic.
Machine tool manufacturing is a popular, profitable industry in western Pennsylvania. Forest Scientific, located in the quaint, beautiful town of Tionesta, is going a step further by collaborating with area schools to offer products and services to help educate today’s generation on the importance of trade skills. Forest Scientific manufactures machines such as CNC routers, mills and lathes, and plasma cutters as well as servicing them. However, their primary target market is schools and career center institutions. Forest Scientific’s goal is to provide students with the necessary equipment to teach trade skills while giving students practical experience. Forest Scientific was proudly featured on Worldwide Business with Kathy Ireland where she interviewed John about the impacts Forest Scientific is making on the lives of aspiring young students.

In 2019, founder and CEO, John Martincic wanted to expand the existing business by purchasing the Tionesta Business Park. The company already leased space at the business park; however, purchasing the facility would allow the business to occupy more space while reducing operating costs at the same time. John came to the PennWest Clarion Small Business Development Center for assistance in developing a financial proposal to present to potential lenders. With the help of PennWest Clarion SBDC and the Northwest Planning and Development Commission, Forest Scientific successfully purchased the Tionesta Business Park and renovated the building to meet the needs of the company.

In addition, the PennWest Clarion SBDC completed an SEO analysis of Forest Scientific’s website for improvement suggestions. A SEO analysis consists of reviewing the functions of a website, such as physical features, search engine results, and the overall quality of the website. Forest Scientific plans to continue improving their marketing efforts by utilizing the Small Business Development Center’s marketing research and database resources. With the continued support of the Clarion University SBDC, Forest Scientific will be able to diversify their target market to offset risk.

West North South East

Northwest Prep Region
Assistance Provided by SBDC:
Financial Projections, Marketing Assistance
Jordan Galasso grew up in Connecticut and moved to Pennsylvania at the age of 20. Prior to moving to PA, he was working as a personal trainer in CT. After moving to PA, he continued to follow that passion in Scranton getting a job as a personal trainer in a local gym. During that time, he did meal prep for himself every week. After seeing the meals he made for himself, Galasso had a client who asked him to start prepping his meals for the week as well. His client was working hard in the gym but wasn’t seeing the results he wanted as he simply couldn’t get his nutrition together.

Galasso started cooking some extra meals for his client and it turned out to be just the thing he needed to help him lose weight.

Eventually more and more people were asking Galasso to meal prep for them. He realized he loved health and fitness, but didn’t want to count reps for people as a personal trainer for his whole life. So, Galasso used his savings to start Fit AF Nutrition in 2017, working with The University of Scranton SBDC for assistance. Fit AF Nutrition is a fully prepared meal delivery service focusing on high quality nutrition to help people lose weight, perform better, feel better and have more energy, currently serving all of northeastern Pennsylvania.

Galasso has continued to work closely with The University of Scranton Small Business Development Center since starting Fit AF Nutrition. His business consultant, Leigh Fennie, helped him with a social media strategy as well as performed industry research which has helped enable the business to grow in revenue as well as geographically.

He also hosted a marketing internship through the SBDC’s Small Business Internship Initiative. This program allowed him to get training and advice on hosting his first intern. He has also worked with business consultant, Winifred McGee, and center director, Lisa Hall Zielinski, on food safety and permits and licensing requirements.

Galasso is always working to improve his business and hopes to expand to include the Lehigh Valley, Philadelphia area and eastern New Jersey. He was recently named 2022 SBA Eastern Pennsylvania Small Business Person of the Year.
As owners of Silvercare Adult Daycare, LLC, and Everest Medical Care, LLC in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, Dr. Li and Dr. Wang have created the Silvercare Nursing and Rehabilitation Facility to serve people who have lower incomes or struggle with language barriers, and can’t or don’t know where to find the healthcare that they have a right to. Creating the name of “Silvercare Campus” was to gear this center towards the seniors in the community, and others who need various services, not just simple doctor visits.

Across five different buildings, and over 300 thousand square feet, this $42 million dollar project will create a campus that will lead to the creation of 300 high-paying jobs in our community. The end-goal: to provide the best healthcare for our community’s seniors and patients, while also providing a boost to Chester City’s tough economic situation.

To best create this campus, Dr. Li and Dr. Wang are opening in phases. Thus far, phase one has been completed, and is providing urgent care in Chester City. The urgent care facility is estimated to serve 20-40 thousand people every year, alone.

Following their successful experiences in Upper Darby, they plan on expanding significantly within the next four phases. Some of those expansions will include the creation of 200 long-term senior care units, 100 apartment units, 1000 drug and alcohol rehabilitation units, and many other healthcare and general accommodations. Dr. Li and Dr. Wang understand Chester City, as an Act 47 community, deserves to have access to better health care, and they hope that their Silvercare Campus will do just that.

After attending the “Engage!” Program, the Widener University SBDC’s Center of Excellence for Health and Life Sciences leaped into action. We began by acquiring valuable market research, financial feasibility analyses, and information to best understand economic programs like LERTA, Chester City’s CDBG program, and local zoning processes.

We also introduced them to various lenders, and guided them in applying for New Market Tax Credits and commercial loans needed to acquire and redevelop the property. With their assistance, Dr. Li and Dr. Wang were able to purchase the site and obtain a bridge loan from the Community First Fund. That funding and the completion of phase one, has already provided top level healthcare for tens of thousands of people, and Dr. Li and Dr. Wang’s next four phases will help provide for tens of thousands more.
Jordan Kotowski came to the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center (SBDC) because he was in the process of purchasing the Abe’s Hotdogs in Mountain Top, Pennsylvania. Jordan’s parents were financing the purchase of the business for $50,000 through a home equity loan they would receive for their residence.

Jordan and his father Jay Kotowski, who is highly involved in the business needed help planning a grand opening event once Jordan took over Abe’s Hotdogs. The clients wanted a small ribbon cutting ceremony to highlight the change of ownership and the fact that Jordan was only 19 years old and ready to take on the responsibility of small business ownership.

The Wilkes University SBDC helped the clients plan, prepare, and organize the event which was scheduled for Saturday, February 10th, 2018 at 3pm. Invites were sent to township officials and the local media to help promote the event. Furthermore, the Wilkes SBDC center requested a Governor’s Proclamation which was sent to Jordan after the grand opening event was held.

Today, almost 5 months after the grand opening event, the business is running successfully under Jordan Kotowski’s ownership. Through the purchase of Abe’s Hotdogs in Mountain Top, PA Jordan created a full time job for himself and retained 5 part time employees. Jay Kotowski used these words to express his experience with the Wilkes University Small Business Development Center – “Kristin Sassi and the team at Wilkes SBDC were so very helpful! They took the time to meet with us one on one and answered all my questions. They took care of our opening day ribbon cutting ceremony needs. The Wilkes SBDC is an asset to the community through the services they provide.”
Addison Fox worked as a software engineer for over seven years. In 2019, he left his job and wasn’t sure he wanted to get another software engineering position. But he knew one thing for sure: which was opening a cookie ice cream shop. Although it was a sweet idea, he didn’t know if it was viable!

The Duquesne University SBDC started working with Addison Fox and Connie Feda who have many years of personal experience baking cookies and were looking to move into a new line of business. They ran a market survey with 150 respondents in the region to validate the business concept. Addison and Connie found a store location in Kennedy Township and were looking at seeking a loan to build out and acquire needed equipment and working capital. Our consultants worked with them on a business plan financials with the intent to seek funding. However, the clients opted to use personal funds to startup the business with a soft opening had on September 10, 2022. An innovative idea they had was to employ part-time young adults with special needs that relies on the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide the needed help to work in their business.

For the SBDC, this celebration was a culmination of a tremendous effort by the client to bring their passion of baking cookies to the community while extending their activities to include young people with special needs and giving them a chance to learn and develop skills in a work environment. The dual offering by this family business will benefit the community in many ways. Congratulations to Cookie Cookie Ice Cream!

Glass Growers Gallery

One of Erie’s oldest art galleries has a new owner! For over 46 years, Glass Growers Gallery has been part of the Erie Community. Emily Ernes is its new owner. The sale of the business was finalized on Sept. 14th. Emily stated she always had aspirations to own some place like Glass Growers and she saw an article in the Erie Times-News that the previous owner was going to sell the business. Emily then contacted the Gannon University Small Business Development Center. After meeting with Bill Dietz, City of Erie Business Consultant, Emily was assisted with business planning, market research, industry forecasting, financial projections, and legal assistance.

After a few weeks Emily was ready to take the big step forward. “It’s a big undertaking to start from scratch. I didn’t know that now would be the time, but I didn’t want to keep putting it off.” Glass Growers Gallery is open for business and has retained the gallery’s two part time employees with years of experience to oversee the day to day operations. You can meet Emily on Saturdays at the gallery during the month of October from 10am to 3pm or go to glassgrowersgallery.com.
Southeast Prep Region

Assistance Provided by SBDC:
Business Plan, License Transfer Research, Permit Requirements

Glenda Reyes came from El Salvador to make her day spa dream come true. She studied cosmetology in her country El Salvador knowing she could transfer her license to the United States in the future. This strategy wasn’t easy to implement because of her limited English and her understanding of the process of validating her license in the United States.

She had jobs as a caregiver or housekeeper but always had a dedicated space in her home to give her facial cleanings to friends and family. “I never gave up searching for information about how to obtain my license in the US.” It took me a while until I finally was put in contact with an agency that could do it,” said Glenda.

She said, “As I was researching information about opening a spa business, I saw a program for Latinos entrepreneurs in Spanish on social media. I immediately contacted Josephine Encarnacion to register for the “Business Skills for Success Seminar.” Glenda had many challenges with her business due to culture shock and understanding the rules and regulations of the business operations in the United States.

As she took the eight-week program, she met one-on-one with the consultant to understand zoning, license requirements, and plan her business. Glenda invested $8,000 in her business-start up and now rents space at a local beauty salon. Her goal is to have her own space in 2023. Glenda expressed how she appreciated the “Business Skills for Success” program because it helped her get organized and understand all the steps involved in opening her business to the public. It kept her motivated and consistent with her purpose. Glenda said, “I feel fulfilled, and I know I can have my own location soon and I will keep seeking advice from the SBDC consultant.”

Lehigh Valley Prep Region

Assistance Provided by SBDC:
Business Plan, Business Financials, Lease Agreements, Business Projections

Lee Sandt was already a successful pro-shop owner and ranked #2 in the country in online sales when he connected with the Lehigh Small Business Development Center. Lee operated his pro shop in a larger facility which included a bowling alley, bar, and two additional service businesses. With Lee’s extensive experience and successful track record, he was poised to expand his business acumen to the larger operation. Lee had a vision to succeed the current owner and to build upon his success.

Based on a referral from Fulton Bank, Lee began working with our SBDC consultant. With a solid business development history of the current owner, along with Lee’s expertise in the industry, there existed a solid foundation to bring the plan together.

Together, Lee in collaboration with his SBDC consultant, were able to:
• Deliver a business plan that included a solid transition story
• Assess complex business financials and lease agreements
• Develop business projections to complete the loan package

After months of negotiation with the bank and a license transfer from the state, Lee obtained the SBA loan and completed the sale. Under Lee’s ownership, he continues the business growth with investment in game technology and renovations to the lounge to improve the client experience.

Steel City Bowl & Brews

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Skin Care & Spa by Glenda Reyes

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She said, “As I was researching information about opening a spa business, I saw a program for Latinos entrepreneurs in Spanish on social media. I immediately contacted Josephine Encarnacion to register for the “Business Skills for Success Seminar.” Glenda had many challenges with her business due to culture shock and understanding the rules and regulations of the business operations in the United States.

As she took the eight-week program, she met one-on-one with the consultant to understand zoning, license requirements, and plan her business. Glenda invested $8,000 in her business-start up and now rents space at a local beauty salon. Her goal is to have her own space in 2023. Glenda expressed how she appreciated the “Business Skills for Success” program because it helped her get organized and understand all the steps involved in opening her business to the public. It kept her motivated and consistent with her purpose. Glenda said, “I feel fulfilled, and I know I can have my own location soon and I will keep seeking advice from the SBDC consultant.”
Liz Webb owned and operated Bloomies, a successful flower shop in Mill Hall, for 10 years before entering the chiropractic/massage therapy industry. After receiving her Pennsylvania license to practice in 2016, she moved to Rochester, New York in 2018 where she added a New York certification and worked in a spa. But in 2020, after moving back home to Lock Haven to be closer to family, Liz realized there was a need for massage services in the area. She decided to open her own massage business but waited until the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic subsided before taking action. When she was more confident with economic circumstances, Liz began to seek potential locations in the fall of 2021. Having worked with the SBDC to establish Bloomies, she reached out and connected with Penn State SBDC Business Consultant Tom Keiffer for support identifying a location and preparing to start up. Keiffer helped Liz develop a budget, financial projections, and a business plan and prepare for a Lock Haven Commercial Loan Program application. If awarded, the funds will help Liz secure working capital for renovation costs, additional equipment, and future hires. "Tom was very encouraging," said Liz. "He told me the steps I needed to do in the order they needed to be done, pointed out different resources, and gave me encouragement that I was on the right path." While she originally hoped to find a location in downtown Lock Haven, the real estate market proved to be challenging. So, after expanding her search, Liz found and secured a location, a former dog grooming salon, in December 2021. By January 2022, she began renovations on the first floor of the building and set a goal of opening on 2/22/22. With a tight timeline, Liz faced several challenges with building renovations. But with long hours, hard work, and the support of her fiancé and some additional helpers, Bliss Massage was ready to open on the originally planned date.

**Bliss Massage**

Central Prep Region
Assistance Provided by SBDC: Budgeting, Financial Projections, Business Plan, Grant Application, Referrals

Mrs. Mahler contacted the SBDC and started the journey of assessing and developing the business proposal. The vision was to create a space where customers can shop, spend time in the meditation room, schedule frequency sessions, attend workshops, and additional services taking on the holistic approach. Emily met with an SBDC consultant to assist her in the feasibility of her dream. She had the knowledge and experience of operating a business but needed to look at the business proposal. The business proposal and projections started to take shape, along with the marketing and services with assistance from the Center. On February 22, 2022, The Wellness Community held its Grand Opening. The Wellness Community is a space for the Somerset community to connect around wellness. All the products and services meet a need for the local community, for those looking for alternatives to mainstream and wanting to take control of their own health. The Somerset Community has welcomed the business to the area.

**The Wellness Community**
Jennie Zoe Mape-Reyes grew up in the Philippines where her family owns a manufacturing and export business that has been in business for over fifty years. She worked there as the marketing executive and head of product design and development acquiring an appreciation for unique handmade and sustainable products for home décor and gifts. Later, Jennie and her husband opened and operated a home décor store in the Philippines.

Jennie approached the Saint Vincent College Small Business Development Center in March 2021 requesting assistance to open a specialty home décor and gift store to follow her passion. The Saint Vincent College SBDC assisted Jennie Reyes with information to establish AZ Home Details LLC with the Pennsylvania Department of State and advised her of the other requirements for the new business, including registration with the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, placing a legal notice in the Westmoreland County Law Journal and a local newspaper. In addition, the need for a Pennsylvania Operating Agreement and the need to open an account specifically for the store were discussed.

The Saint Vincent College SBDC provided Jennie Zoe with information and governmental office referrals for hiring her first employee in preparation for the need for a part-time or full-time employee for the holidays and/or as the business grows. The Saint Vincent College SBDC partnered with the University of Pittsburgh SBDC to assist the client with a review of the company website and eCommerce including Social Media. The client was provided with a report and zoom meeting outlining suggestions for improvement of their electronic marketing which they have started to implement to drive additional customers to the store.

Jennie commented, “They (the SBDC) assisted me with all the paperwork and requirements to start my business. They are awesome and I’m very thankful for their assistance.”

Souls smoked BBQ

Be careful what you wish for! For TJ Morton, that motto is ringing true. Last year, TJ contacted the Shippensburg University SBDC to start his small business, Soul Smoked BBQ, LLC. As a self-styled foodie and someone who had perfected the art of smoking meats, TJ was ready to explore the options of starting a food truck business. With the support of his loving wife Heather, who helped make all of this possible, TJ is fully employed at his business and sales have exceeded his expectation.

TJ has always loved cooking. He says, “I would stay in the kitchen with my mom every time she cooked. I remember a time when I used to get mad because I thought she was melting the ice cream and I would always ask her why. She told me that it was “lard” but I kept insisting it was ice cream. Well one day she got tired of me asking and she gave me some and let me tell you I never asked that question again! As I’m writing this I can still remember the taste “disgusting”. As I got older I became infatuated with the smell of BBQ. I started cooking for the family and I bent my fair share of food, but then also I just kept telling myself how good it was and I honestly thought they were just being kind and not candid. Then requests started coming in for my BBQ and the light went off; maybe they are being honest. So with my love for cooking and my passion for feeding people’s souls, Soul Smoked BBQ LLC was formed.

TJ reached out to the SBDC for advice and he says the help he received was phenomenal. “I jumped into this knowing absolutely nothing. I could not have asked for a better Business Consultant than Georgina. She laid out the blueprint, was always there if I had questions and to me, good or bad, and yes she hurt my feelings sometimes but it never gave me up. I followed the blueprint and made it to the finish line. I would not have been able to do this on my own. The Shippensburg University SBDC is totally awesome hands down.”
Marc Faletti is a vinyl lover who noticed something about shopping for records that he thought he could fix: that you have to know what you’re looking for. He wanted to make a place where anyone could walk in and find an old favorite, a new gem, or a perfect gift without having to know precisely the name of the band or the correctly categorized genre of the music.

As a media producer and DJ, Mr. Faletti knows what sounds will pack a dance floor. He wanted to build a store that captured that same energy across lots of kinds of products. His perfectly curated record selection (findable by mood, decade, or genre) is just one treat that shoppers will find at Latchkey on Passyunk Ave in South Philly or on his online store at shoplatchkey.com. There are also bath bombs and candles inspired by ‘80s and ‘90s hits and favorite movies, such as the “As You Wish” candle or the “$5 Milkshake” bath bomb, and a host of other fun gifts and novelty items including vintage jewelry, comic book memorabilia, and greeting cards. Latchkey is a love letter to the ‘80s and ‘90s, and lovers of those decades will feel right at home in this store.

While Mr. Faletti had a clear vision and some great products, he had never been a business owner before, much less run a retail storefront, and so he approached Temple SBDC for support. SBDC consultant Isabel Krome reviewed Latchkey’s business plan and financial projections, connected Mr. Faletti to legal and accounting resources, and provided guidance during the start up process.

Latchkey is an awesome addition to the Passyunk Ave retail environment. While it’s currently open on weekends only, keep an eye on social media for updates on operating hours and fun happenings in the store.

Karen Perdomo started her first Colombian food restaurant in 2016 on Carson Street in the South Side of Pittsburgh along with the support from her husband John Ortiz. In 2020, she had to deal with Covid-19, where she relied on her business background, family support, cultural relationships and was able to maintain and retain customers. Now, she is starting her second Colombian food restaurant in Forbes Avenue in Oakland, near the University of Pittsburgh.

They saw an opportunity, which was to offer their food and culture of Colombia to Pittsburgh. They wanted to be near the University of Pittsburgh in Oakland to add to its eclectic, international and diverse demographics. The concept is different from the first one. This restaurant uses technology, speedy take-outs and offer gluten-free, veggie options while keeping the good cultural traits and good quality food.

One of the strategies for growth is to do business with the University of Pittsburgh. She approached the Small Business Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh to get information on the Panther card reader and to attend training events on Doing Business with Pitt and Doing Business with UPMC. The SBDC introduced the client to the Oakland Business Improvement District, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, PRESENT and the Pitt News. As a result, the company has successfully opened their second location, hired 5 additional people, and invested over $100,000 in the business. She is a woman-owned business and appreciates all the marketing information and publicity she can get. She offers the best of Colombian food to the university, residential and professional communities in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Region. As she said, “There are many flavors and customer types. I pay attention to what the customer wants”. She works closely with Brent Rondon from the University of Pittsburgh SBDC.