

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

www.ci.norfolk.ne.us

May 14, 2014

“Small Business Resource Team”

When Luis Onate wanted to start a business making and selling specialty granola, he knew a good first step would be to find some one to give him guidance. He found that guidance with members of the Small Business Resource Team (SBRT) based in Norfolk.



With one call to the Nebraska Business Development Center, Onate had the knowledge and resources of the entire Small Business Resource Team (SBRT) at his disposal. The team is made up of 12 different economic development entities that provide help at different stages and for different aspects of business starts and growth. All of the different groups decided last year they could be more effective offering their services to business owners if they had a one-stop

mentality. The City of Norfolk Economic Development Division became the contact point for the group and they then refer businesses to the other SBRT partners.

“Norfolk is unique in that Courtney and her staff have brought together all the small business resource providers in the region into one group. All of these resource partners have one goal - to assist startup as well as existing businesses,” said Loren Kucera, director of the Nebraska Business Development Center.

A small business owner or manager looking for help may not be sure where to go for assistance so the SBRT has set up a website at www.norfolksmallbiz.com for links to all of the partners and a description about what services each can offer a small business.

Onate was able to procure \$50,000 worth of loans through his contact with the SBRT partners. His business on Benjamin Avenue, The Granola House, has now expanded to baked goods including muffins, cookies and rolls.

“I submitted my business plan to Loren and he helped me get accepted for NEDCO funds and get help from REAP (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project). The City has also been helpful to make my business grow,” Onate said.

interested can also sign up for the Small Business Resource Team e-Newsletter at ci.norfolk.ne.us and clicking on Subscribe to City E-Newsletter on the left side of the page.

Eight years ago Luis Onate decided to start his own business. He gave a call to his uncle in Mexico who owns a granola company there, got his recipes, tweaked them a bit and opened the Granola House.

It's Small Business Week which is a time to recognize that 63% of the new jobs created in the last 20 years came from small businesses and entrepreneurs like Onate. Small business owners and managers have much the same motivation as Onate, to decide their own future and work on their own terms.

The Granola House has grown from a home-based business to a store front at 600 West Benjamin. The product line has also expanded. Besides specialty flavored granola, Onate also offers homemade cookies, rolls, muffins and kolaches. He sells his product at the store and also distributes it through local grocery stores. Through the Small Business Resource Team in Norfolk, he was able to apply and qualify for low interest loans and subsequently buy a professional oven and other equipment.

"I would recommend that anyone starting their own business do your research and get help where you can. You also need to make sure you love what you're doing," Onate said.