Manuel Basabe begins his work day like many small shop owners—he places a hand-chalked sign on the sidewalk outside his storefront, carries out racks of clothes for passers-by to peruse and sits down at his laptop inside his small boutique Mesheeka on Logan Avenue.

Vibrant paintings adorn the walls, their motifs reproduced on some of the t-shirts for sale. Basabe began his clothing line in 2009 and settled into his brick-and-mortar location in November 2015.

A few doors south on Logan Avenue, sisters Elizabeth Rodriguez and Danielle Cisneros also operate a small sidewalk business, the Chicanaista Boutique. The sisters have sold their hand-made and repurposed items throughout San Diego at farmer’s markets and festivals, but also upgraded their approach to business, especially his bookkeeping.

"I would just throw it in a box," he said, "I had a bookkeeping box. Now I have a ledger, a file and everything is super organized."

As an artist, he said he struggled at first with the numbers part of the business.

"That’s not the fun part of having a business," Basabe said. "The fun part is making money, meeting people and talking and laughing. That’s the fun part."

He also took out a loan upon graduation in order to fund the next phase of Mesheeka: ice cream.

"In five years we’re going to be the ice cream king of San Diego," he said. "It’s going to be culturally inspired ice cream, creating jobs and contributing to our tax base," Schott said.

"We see a lot of people looking to donate to our organization because of the impact we’re making on the economy."

Accion is funded by a menagerie of government and private entities, including federal and local grants as well as banking partnerships. A grant from Wells Fargo launched the entrepreneur’s academy three years ago and continues to fund it today.

"Small businesses in San Diego comprise over 90 percent of all businesses so they’re powerful in our local economy, creating jobs and contributing to our tax base," Schott said.

"We see a lot of people looking to donate to our organization because of the impact we’re making on the economy."

The Mesheeka boutique operated by Manual Basabe.
There’s going to be an ice cream shop but with a gift shop, “Basabe said. “We’re going to keep everything but it’s going to be a different look, the focus is going to be on the ice cream.”

Rodriguez and Cisneros have similar goals for growth for Chicanista Boutique, now located in front of the Church on Logan Avenue. “We’d like to have multiple locations with carts,” Cisneros said. “We want to have different workshops, like sewing and piñata-making classes.”

Chicanista’s first piñata-making class is scheduled for Oct. 15. “We learned to sew from our aunts and our mom,” Rodriguez said. “These are things close to our culture, and we want to continue these traditions.”

Rodriguez, who graduated from Accion’s Entrepreneur’s Academy one year ago, said the course has helped her hone in and focus on her business. “Having a business counselor available who has real world experience who is not disrespectful, but honest and straightforward really changed the game,” she said. “They teach you how to succeed using skills and techniques that might push you out of your comfort zone, but that’s where you learn the most, and that’s where you become successful.”

Making the leap into entrepreneurship can be intimidating. Schott said fear and lack of preparation are common roadblocks for aspiring entrepreneurs. She said education and being familiar with one’s credit were key in launching a business. “Surround yourself with experts and find a trusted accountant,” she said.

Basabe, Rodriguez and Hard all said they would recommend the Accion academy to anyone planning on starting a business. “I think anyone who is just starting or considering starting a business should consider participating,” Rodriguez said. “The loan (from Accion) has helped me grow and improve my business,” Basabe said. “Big banks are kind of heartless, and Accion is for the people, I’m really blessed.”

Small businesses in San Diego comprise over 90 percent of all businesses so they’re powerful in our local economy, creating jobs and contributing to our tax base,” says Accion CEO Elizabeth Schott. “We see a lot of people looking to donate to our organization because of the impact we’re making on the economy.”
JPMorgan Chase Awards $600,000 Grant To San Diego-Based Accion

Accion, the San Diego-based microlender, has been awarded a $600,000 grant from JPMorgan Chase & Co. to support the continued expansion of the agency’s program providing capital to entrepreneurs in Southern California.

The grant will be awarded in two $300,000 installments in 2016 and 2017 and will be used to increase lending activities to grow the loan portfolio across the organization’s four-county territory, as well as help raise additional loan capital for Accion to serve more entrepreneurs.

Accion has been serving entrepreneurs in San Diego County since 1994, before expanding into Imperial County in July 2015 and Riverside and San Bernardino counties in January 2016.

“Small business owners have identified flexible capital as a critical resource for growth, but they face a shortage of this kind of support,” said Myeisha Peguero Gamino, vice president of corporate responsibility for JPMorgan Chase in Southern California. “Microlenders, like Accion, provide small businesses with the consulting and financing they need to grow their operations. We’re very proud to partner with Accion and enhance their efforts to provide access to the capital and assistance that Southern California entrepreneurs need most.”

“This grant comes at a time of expansion for our organization and will support us in boosting organizational capacity,” said Accion CEO Elizabeth Schott. “We look forward to empowering even more entrepreneurs with these funds, and we are thrilled that JPMorgan Chase recognizes our work in the community to help small business owners achieve their dreams, while creating true economic impact.”

“This grant will be instrumental in supporting the expansion of our microlending program to the new counties we serve.”

Elizabeth Schott, CEO of Accion.

SBA Launches New Website for America’s Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs

Certify.sba.gov will assist small firms doing business with federal government

With this website, SBA’s contracting application and certification process for women-owned small businesses is now completely accessible online and easier than ever to complete. Women contractors can now easily manage the certification process, including Third Party Certifications as part of the WOSB Federal Contract Program.

The new website will eventually serve additional SBA contracting opportunities. Accion creates access to jobs for local business owners by providing support and access to capital. On average, three jobs are created for every business funded by Accion.

The organization also helps entrepreneurs build favorable credit histories and improve their business skills through resource events, such as the Small Business Boot Camp in San Diego on Saturday, Oct. 1. All of Accion’s events are specially tailored toward the needs and questions of small business owners.

Accion works strategically with local partners, such as banking institutions, and nonprofit organizations, like JPMorgan Chase, to support main street businesses, from restaurants and retail shops to home-based daycares and web-based businesses.

Small businesses often get too little credit for their work as our nation’s leading job-creators, generating nearly two out of three net new jobs in our economy. SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet

SBA Launches New Website for America’s Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs Certify.sba.gov will assist small firms doing business with federal government

The Small Business Administration has launched certify.sba.gov — a new website to further streamline and improve the application processes for small businesses and entrepreneurs seeking to do business with the federal government.

“SBA is committed to being as nimble and agile as the small businesses we serve. In addition to LINC, our Start Up In a Day Initiative, and Small Business Tech Coalition, the new website will eventually serve additional SBA contracting programs, including the 8(a) Business Development Program, the HUBZone Program, and others. The site will allow several forms to be filled out electronically, reducing the burden of printing, scanning, and uploading. As additional certifications like the 8(a) Business Development Program are moved into the new system, documents uploaded for one program may be reused for another.

The site also has a tool called “Am I Eligible?” which allows a small business to answer approximately 15 questions and to determine if the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program, the HUBZone Program, and/or the 8(a) Business Development Program are a good fit for their business.

“Small businesses often get too little credit for their work as our nation’s leading job-creators, generating nearly two out of three net new jobs in our economy,” Contreras-Sweet added. “Last fiscal year the federal government awarded its highest percentage of contracting dollars to small businesses in the history of the United States, totaling more than $90 billion. Those resources supported more than half a million jobs in communities across this country. When these federal dollars churn in local communities, they create a multiplier effect that strengthens the local tax base and leads to better government services and better schools. That’s the promise of our work.”

SBA is coordinating additional public announcements to amplify the system’s launch. Questions about the WOSB Federal Contract Program should be directed to wosb@sba.gov.

SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet

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