The Igloo Ice Cream Parlor: Poised for a Cool Future

Nicholas Papoutsis first contacted the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Shippensburg University in early February 2014. Nicholas was going through a life transition at the time, having recently been “downsized” after 38 years working as a manufacturing engineer and he had become aware of a local business that was for sale. The business, the Igloo Ice Cream Parlor, is a Chambersburg landmark that had been meeting the community’s cooling creamery needs for over 50 years.

Nicholas states he has wanted to be in the food industry since he was a young boy, perhaps because his grandparents owned the Texas Lunch in Shippensburg, PA and the fond memories he has of time spent there in his early years. Nicholas saw the opportunity to become an “encore entrepreneur” and he decided to pursue the opportunity.

With no previous small business experience, Nicholas was uncertain where to turn for assistance until a loan officer at F&M Trust suggested he contact the SBDC. Within two weeks of contacting the SBDC Nicholas attended both First and Second Step workshops offered at the Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce. These workshops provided an opportunity for him to discuss the opportunity with SBDC Business Consultant Cheryl Young.

Though not yet in a formal consulting engagement, Nicholas found the information provided by Cheryl, both in the workshops and in addition to the workshops, to be quite valuable. He notes that, “Cheryl provided great insight and guidance that helped me to push through in the initial stages of getting started.” Cheryl raised many questions and concerns specific to owning and managing the business that Nicholas had not considered. He now understands from experience, however, that these issues are critically important to both business success and Nicholas’ potential satisfaction as a business owner.

Nicholas purchased the Igloo with initial financing provided by the former owner. Within a few months, however, Nicholas was ready to pursue traditional bank financing to fulfill his debt obligation. He reconnected with the SBDC and entered into a consulting engagement to develop a business plan to present to prospective lenders. Cheryl helped with the overall plan development, including customer demographics, local competition and detailed financial projections for the business. Nicholas was successful in getting a loan to repay the previous owner and he established a working line of credit with the bank at the same time.

During his first “season” of ownership, Nicholas utilized 17 part-time employees, introduced a “flavor of the week,” and received very positive and highly visible local media attention. The Igloo had sales of almost $80K this first year and Nicholas “learned a lot.” Nicholas is appreciative of the local community support and for the technical assistance and personal support he found at the SBDC. He “highly recommends the SBDC to other entrepreneurs who need help in making their business ideas a reality.” He considers the SBDC a “great resource” and is very appreciative for the assistance he received.

Hopefully the community of Chambersburg will continue to enjoy the Igloo’s ice cream for years to come. And, Nicholas’ relationship with his SBDC Consultant remains a source of information and support as business challenges arise. He even sends emails to Cheryl such as the following – “Better get the peanut butter today. This is the last day for it. If you can't make it by let me know and I will save you some. Again, thanks a lot for all the help.”