## MCSC Client Success Story

**Liz Cordoba**
**Cordoba Rhoads - Sustainable, Bikable Clothing**
**San Luis Obispo, CA**

Raised in Mendocino County, Liz Cordoba moved to the central coast in 1993 and began her career as a Spanish teacher. After years of twelve-hour workdays commuting to Santa Maria, Liz decided to overcome the burnout by starting her own business. She managed to save two-thirds of her income for one year to use the money to cover her start-up expenses.

An avid bicyclist, Liz wanted to start a business that incorporated her passions and her practical nature. She hoped to develop a line of clothing that could be worn comfortably on a bike, yet look fashionable and professional for work. It was important for Liz to create a product out of sustainable materials, but she soon found that everything she needed to learn – about sourcing, manufacturing, and marketing -- was overwhelming. She needed help.

Liz learned about MCSC's *Start, Run, and Grow Your Business* class in the spring of 2014, and found it to be just the springboard she needed. She says that working on her business plan was crucial to being able to see the big picture of what was involved in becoming an entrepreneur. "It helped me to see the details I needed to organize in order to start my business." But, it wasn't just the business plan that helped her get started. She says the weekly lessons, classmate support, and the homework assigned by MCSC instructor Ken Kehs was invaluable to keep her on track.

As most entrepreneurs know, sometimes it is necessary to adjust plans in light of new or changing circumstances. While Liz was busy researching manufacturing options and studying sewing patterns for her bike clothing, it became clear that it would take more time and money than her financials could stand. So she began to repurpose thrift-store clothing to make into hats, gloves, and aprons, to create an immediate income. She soon realized that the low unit cost and short production time of making these "upcycled" accessories opened a new door for her.

Liz struggled with the idea of abandoning her original idea, and making the shift from manufacturing to artisan crafting, so she reached out to MCSC consultant Lorna Whiteaker, who encouraged this new direction. "Liz has a great eye for design and the motivation to turn her passion into a business. She loves making repurposed, upcycled items and has the ability to produce a lot of these items relatively quickly." With Lorna's professional advice and guidance, Liz began creating her inventory of unique, beautiful upcycled accessories. And she is still hoping to make bike clothing in the future.

"I could not have started my business without my MCSC consultant." Liz says, "She was crucial in helping me stay focused by showing me how to set my short-term goals, and giving me assignments with deadlines. She also suggested some options, like selling at craft fairs, which I had not considered. And, she was my first customer!"

In December of 2014, Liz officially launched her business at the *Holiday in the Plaza Arts & Crafts Fair* at the Mission Plaza in San Luis Obispo. "I love to create things, and I love it even more when people want to buy my creations!" says Liz with pride. Liz and Lorna still work together as necessary, and Liz knows that she still has the support of MCSC's counselors and staff for as long as she needs it.

When asked what advice she would give to an aspiring entrepreneur, Liz says, "Take a class and get a business plan! Starting a business is daunting enough as it is. It really helps to think through the details and figure out the finances ahead of time. It's wonderful to have the support and education necessary to keep you going."

Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U. S. Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA. All SBA programs and services are provided to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Accommodations will be provided to clients with limited English proficiency and/or disabilities when requested at least two weeks in advance. Please contact Chuck Jehle at MCSC, 805-595-1357.