

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

API Small Business Program Woman's Center



This Women's History Month, we're spotlighting the Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program Women's Business Center (API SBP WBS) and their vital work uplifting women entrepreneurs. LTSC is a proud member and fiscal sponsor of the API SPB program.

When COVID-19 hit, Teresita "Tess" Mercado was furloughed from her flight attendant job at United Airlines after 14 years. Not one to give up easily, Tess decided to pursue her dream of becoming a gourmet snack purveyor, restarting the Nutridge Farms business she put on hold 17 years ago.

By April, Tess had registered the business in California, launched a website, obtained a commercial kitchen space, received approval by the

San Bernardino Health Department, and secured three wholesale customers. For Tess, the signature nuts and pretzels created at Nutridge Farms are a true labor of love as she uses only the best products for her customers assuring them impeccable personalized service every time.

Tess contacted API SBP looking for assistance with minority-owned certifications. Together with small business counselor Sharon Senko, Tess strategized about scaling production and targeting larger wholesale customers. She realized her products are ideal for specialty grocers and shifted her sales strategy. Through her hard work and tenacity Tess landed 5 additional wholesale customers and in September closed a deal with Jensen's Foods. She is looking to hire part-time help and will soon need a larger commercial kitchen space. "I am so proud of Tess. To change careers and re-start a business takes courage and she is one of the most resilient women I know," said Sharon.

"Working with my API SBP business counselor has truly been a Godsend. Sharon Senko is not just my counselor but an invaluable partner. I look forward to our standing weekly meetings to report my weekly progress and get her feedback. She not only provides me with valuable information and resources on how to grow my business, but also provides encouragement and support that keeps me motivated and accountable. I was very fortunate to be partnered with Sharon from the onset and can attribute some of my success to her and the program in general," says Tess.

You can find Nutridge Farms' products at Cal Poly Pomona Farm Market, Tom's Farms Candy Shoppe & Farmer's Market, The Avocado House, Idyllwild Village Market, Gerrard's Market, Irvine Ranch Market, Jensen's Finest Foods, and at the Chino Hills Farmer's Market. Or order online at: www.nutridgefarms.com.