

HOUSTON DISTRICT OFFICE NEWS

January 2009

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SBA DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Filing Deadline Extended

Whether you rent or own your own home, own your own business, or own a small agricultural cooperative located in a declared disaster area, and are the victim of a disaster, you may be eligible for financial assistance from the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The application filing deadline for physical damages has been extended to February 6, 2009. The EIDL loan application deadline is June 15, 2009. Electronic applications are available online at www.sba.gov. You also have the option to submit an application via mail. Individuals who are homeowners or renters must register with FEMA at 1-800-462-7585.

Disaster Recovery Centers, Business Assistance Centers, and SBA Disaster Loan Outreach Centers are still open in the surrounding area. Visit www.sba.gov for a list of locations and hours of operation.

Customer Service

Hurricane Dolly and Ike survivors may contact SBA for help with insurance check questions. South Texas residents who have questions about insurance checks co-payable to the insured and the SBA should call SBA's Disaster Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. EST. The center takes calls weekends from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. EST. The Disaster Customer Service Center can also be reached by e-mail at disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.

For the latest news and information about SBA's Disaster Assistance program, visit www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance.

Helping small businesses
start, grow and **succeed**.



SAVE THE DATE

MONEY WEEK HOUSTON 2009

Money Week Houston, a public awareness campaign that promotes financial education, is scheduled for April 19-25, 2009. Hundreds of local organizations, including businesses, financial institutions, schools, libraries, government agencies, faith-based organizations, non-profits, and media are collaborating to help educate consumers during this week long event.

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK 2009

National Small Business Week is scheduled for May 18-22, 2009. This year's 46th annual event will honor the nation's most outstanding entrepreneurs as well as individuals involved in disaster recovery, government contracting, small business champions and SBA partners in financial and entrepreneurial development. More information on HDO's local Small Business Week will be in the April issue.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SCORE Workshops:

Low Cost Marketing: Jan. 13, 2009

Business Money Management: Jan. 20, 2009

Time: 6:30pm - 8:30pm

Place: 5330 Griggs Rd., Houston, TX 77021

Fee: \$10/workshop or \$25 for all three

SCORE Seminar: *Surviving The Tough Times*

Date: January 10, 2009

Time: 9:30am-1:30pm

Place: Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce, 4749 N Twin City Hwy., Port Arthur, TX 77642

RSVP: 409-246-4459

Free Business Loan Workshop

Date: January 27, 2009

Time: 6:00pm - 8:00pm

Place: Wharton Civic Center, 1944 N. Fulton ST., Wharton, TX

RSVP: 979-244-8466

Free 8(a) BD, SDB & Hubzone Workshop

Date: **February 4, 2009**

Time: 9:00am -12:00pm

Place: UH SBDC, 2302 Fannin St, #200 Houston, TX 77002

RSVP: 713-752-8488

SUCCESS STORY

The Passion for Flowers Blooms into a Successful Business



Sue Habib

With a family history in the flower business, Sue Habib thought it ideal to start her own business as a florist. She and her three children immigrated to the United States in 1985 from Lebanon. Growing up, Sue recalls her father owned the largest rose farm and flower shop in Lebanon. Although she never had to work in the family business, she had the passion and drive to start her own business. In 1986, Sue opened Lexis Florist in Southwest Houston where she operated for eleven years; an amazing achievement for someone who knew very little English and who never had to work before. "By the grace of God, I was able to make it," said Sue.

After eleven years, she was ready to expand her business. Sue met Najla Tanous, District Counsel of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Houston District, who informed her of SBA's loan programs. Sue contacted the Houston SBA Office and their resource partner, the University

of Houston Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for assistance. In 1997, she was approved for a loan to build out her new flower shop in the prestigious address of the Galleria area. By this time, Sue's reputation of artistic design and innovation in the floral arrangement industry was wide spread in the Houston area.

Her signature designs are recognized by many and have won numerous awards. Sue designed large-scale floral displays for some of Houston's most important events, including Super Bowl XXXVIII and events with former President George Bush, Texas Governor Rick Perry and presidential nominee Al Gore. Lexis Florist was listed twice among the Top 100 Florists in America by FTD and placed first several years at the Houston Galleria Primavera Show. These awards along with many others are displayed throughout the walls and shelves of her showroom on San Felipe.

Sue also has an 8500 square foot warehouse where all the arrangements are created and a staff of 20 employees to support the demand of her growing business. Ideas come to her at any given time and each morning she visits the warehouse to bring these ideas to life. Flowers are imported from all over world, including orchids from Thailand, roses from Ecuador and tulips from Holland.

Lexis Florist caters to everyone's needs whether small or large including hotels, corporate events, restaurants, weddings, and special events. Sue is an advocate for SBA lending; having had two SBA guaranteed loans. Today Lexis Florist is grossing close to \$2 million in sales. When asked about advice to people wanting to start their own business, Sue said "Have passion and persistence, get an SBA loan, and give back to the community." Sue is a member of many organizations and is on the board of the Asian Chamber, Galleria Chamber and Better Business Bureau. "I feel like a native Houstonian. The city is beautiful and the people are very friendly, loving, and supportive. In return, I give back to the city I call home by contributing to various fundraisers, charities, and organizations, including Pink Ribbon, American Heart Association, and Cancer Society."

Sue's daughter who recently graduated from the University of Houston with a Marketing degree will join the business. Sue plans to continue to grow the business and one day leave the legacy to her daughter.

IN THE NEWS

MED Week 2008

Minority Enterprise Development Week (MED Week) was designated by a presidential proclamation in 1983 to recognize and promote the achievements of minority-owned businesses and advocates of minority businesses. It is a national initiative of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).

The local event was celebrated and hosted the week of October 20-24 by the Houston Minority Business Enterprise Center (HMBEC) and partially funded by the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA). This year's theme was The Power of Strategic Alliances in the Global Economy.



(L-R) Project Director of Houston MBDC Milton Thibodeaux & SBA Marketing Coordinator Cleveland Baker. Cleveland was presented with a lifetime achievement award.



SBA Communication Specialist Alex Contreras from the Office of Disaster Assistance presented at the Disaster Relief Opportunity Forum during the Greater Houston Business Procurement Forum Breakfast

Houston District Office Fourteen Most Active Lenders/CDCs For month ending December 31, 2008

<u>Bank Name</u>	Gross Approvals \$	Loan Volume
Wells Fargo	\$7,724,400	23
Compass Bank	\$3,375,600	22
Amegy Bank	\$1,385,000	12
Houston Galveston CDC	\$11,444,000	11
JP Morgan Chase Bank	\$2,115,000	10
Capital CDC	\$4,089,000	7
First Bank (MO)	\$853,000	7
Westbound Bank	\$3,215,000	7
Banco Popular	\$1,325,500	6
Bank of America	\$160,000	4
Midsouth Bank (Lafayette LA)	\$711,500	4
North Texas CDC	\$4,662,000	4
Texas First Bank	\$769,200	4
Woodforest National Bank	\$2,463,000	4