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Hurd on the Hill: Lori's Small Business Story

Women's History Month: Celebrating Women Entrepreneurs

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It all started with chutney. Lori Krieger, from Castroville, Texas, was a busy mom of three who was working full-time in marketing for a San Antonio law firm. Though already on the path to success in her corporate job, Lori was dissatisfied with the lack of time she had to spend with her family. "I never saw my kids. Every night was homework, dinner, brush teeth and then bed. I was miserable. There was no time to just cherish them as my babies."

Lori had always loved to cook and found that coming up with new recipes, especially salsas, was a way to de-stress and explore her creative side. But it was her fig chutney that started getting rave reviews from her friends and family. "You have to sell this" became the standard reaction. During this time is when she had what she describes as her 'clear moment.'



"I realized that this was my passion. Though I was exhausted from working all day, I loved cooking and creating to the early morning hours and just wanted to do it again." This realization led to a family discussion – would following her passion and creating delicious food to sell from home also give her more time with her three boys and the brand new little Vivian? Lori and her husband Benny decided it was worth finding out, and **Taste Elevated**, now a quickly growing female-owned small business, was born.

Lori joined the over 890,000 companies in Texas that are owned by women, which is almost 9 percent of the total number of women-owned businesses in the United States, the second highest state total in the nation. There are about 10 million American companies owned by women that employ millions of people and generate well over a trillion dollars in receipts every year. While these businesses obviously generate substantial job and economic growth for our nation, it's not without enormous struggles.

When Lori decided to launch Taste Elevated, she was "all in". Because of her background in marketing, she knew perhaps more than the average person trying to start a small business, but looking back now, she's amazed at how much she didn't know to expect. "Permits, accounting, marketing, business licenses, IT issues,



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taxes, regulations, employees, contract management, and negotiations – it’s overwhelming. That’s all in addition to the creative and production part – the heart of the business. And trying to get access to more capital as we grow is a constant struggle.”

In fact, according to the National Women’s Business Council, women-owned businesses have a harder time accessing capital than male-owned companies and on average, they start with half the amount of capital when they start their company. Lori has a lot of praise for the University of Texas San Antonio Small Business Development Center for helping her find a lender, People Fund, which she says has made a huge difference in her ability to expand her small company as her vision expands. “What really cracks me up is how many people think that small business owners are rich. It takes an enormous amount of money to do what we do. I’m always having to look for more access to capital.”

While Lori originally only planned on creating and marketing six products, she has expanded that product line and took the risky step of opening a storefront in Castroville. But the decision she made afterwards is what makes Lori’s endeavors truly special. With an eye to helping other small businesses and pulling in visitors to Castroville, Lori started a weekly Farmer’s Market. Every weekend, you can find any number of family businesses selling their home-made products on the streets surrounding her store, as well as inside her own front room.

“There are a lot of great things happening with **Taste Elevated**, but there is always something happening behind the scenes that makes this the most stressful thing I’ve ever done in my life. The hardest part is right now – growing – trying to transition from being a ‘little guy’ to a ‘big guy’ in this industry.”

As Lori’s representative in Congress, my job is to try and remove the unreasonable barriers that government has put in place that make it harder for **Taste Elevated** to grow. She’s one of the reasons I fight for lower taxes and less red tape. “If someone had shown me before I started **Taste Elevated** all the glory of owning a small business in one hand, and then all the struggles in the other, right now I’m not sure what I would have chosen,” says Lori. Running a small business is already hard – there’s no reason for government to make it more difficult.

I’m grateful for the risks that Lori and other small business owners take every day across the 23rd Congressional District of Texas to grow our economy. Real economic growth and innovation happens in our local communities. I take great pride in being able to represent small business owners like Lori and applaud the hard work and dedication that represents the best of our entrepreneurial spirit.