



Louisiana Small Business Development Center

For Immediate Release

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Recipe for Success Includes Assistance from LSBDC at Southern University, Baton Rouge

(Central, LA) Food and hospitality are a way of life for Debbie Cooper. She has spent more than 30 years cooking and serving food at restaurants and with catering companies. After years of working for others, Debbie decided to open her own business called “Cooper Catering and Café, LLC,” located at 10443 Joor Rd., in Central, LA.

Cooper Catering & Café quickly became a staple in the small town life of Central, Louisiana- a newly incorporated city who’s motto is a community that cares. Everyone from the Mayor to the Chamber of Commerce meet regularly at the quaint little café with a seating capacity of 55 people. A 1,200 square foot reception hall also sits on the property. Debbie caters many functions from weddings to events at the Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion.



Debbie Cooper, owner, Cooper Catering & Cafe

Debbie is well known in this town of 27,000 people not just for her good food but her good works as well. She’s very active in her community from cooking in the City of Central Chamber of Commerce’s Cook-off which raises money for Central schools to serving 9,000 prepared meals a day during Hurricane Katrina. So it’s not surprising that within just two years, she was looking to expand, and Debbie turned to the **Louisiana Small Business Development Center (LSBDC) at Southern University** in Baton Rouge.

The LSBDC at Southern University partners with Louisiana Economic Development and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide individual business consulting at no cost to the small business owner. The center also provides low-cost business training. These services are aimed at helping business owners and entrepreneurs start, grow, and expand their companies.

“When I asked a couple of State Representatives and Senators their advice on what to do to find the financing to expand, they all told me to go to the Louisiana Small Business Development Center. My LSBDC consultant, Leighton Bryant went over all the different loan programs with me and helped me apply for a Seedco Financial loan and a SBA Community Express loan. Leighton was so helpful and answered all my questions,” praised Cooper.

The Community Express loan through Superior Financial Group gave Debbie more working capital. The Seedco Financial loan allowed Debbie to purchase a catering truck, which gave her the capacity to accept larger catering jobs. Cooper was able to hire two more part-time workers. Her business created **5 full-time jobs and 5 part-time jobs**. LSBDC consultant Leighton Bryant also advised Debbie to get a longer lease and provided marketing assistance.

According to an independent ASBDC economic impact study for Louisiana, LSBDC clients experience a 25 percent increase in sales and an 11 percent increase in employment levels as compared to the average Louisiana business.

“My LSBDC consultant was excellent. Leighton Bryant really took the time to listen to me and help me grow my small business bigger,” said Debbie.

To contact the LSBDC at Southern University, Baton Rouge, call 225-922-0998 or email lsbdc.subr@lsbdc.org.



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