

Celebrating

NATIONAL  
**WOMEN'S SMALL BUSINESS**

MONTH



OCTOBER  
2020

**Hillsborough Economic and Business Development Commission (EBDC) Recognizes National Women's Small Business Month - Spotlight on Alicia Arango of La Costeñita**



October is "**National Women's Small Business Month**" and was created to celebrate the growth and accomplishments of female entrepreneurs and to recognize the vital role they play in our economy. The Economic & Business Development Commission (EBDC) is taking the opportunity to recognize women business owners in Hillsborough. The EBDC has invited all Hillsborough women business owners in the Hillsborough Business Association (HBA) to share a few details of their business by completing a questionnaire. These business owners' responses will be released on the Hillsborough Business Association Facebook page, the Township's website and in the Mayor's e-newsletter. Additionally, October will feature weekly "Q&A Profiles" of successful female business owners in Hillsborough.

Q: Tell us a little about your business model/service and your target client.

A: La Costeñita focuses on providing homemade food cooked entirely on our site, using natural and fresh ingredients. We also offer a variety of Mexican products, which can be used for your daily diet, or to venture to recreate some Mexican recipes.

Q: What is your business background prior to owning this business?

A: None. Before La Costenita, I was a normal person and worked a normal job. I had experience in direct sales and customer service as a beauty consultant.

Q: When did your current business open, what led you to open this particular business and why did you choose Hillsborough?

A: My ego. I believed in my children's words: "Mami, your food is so delicious; why don't you open a restaurant?" Of course, they didn't know any better. Also, I have a cousin living in Hillsborough who complained about not having anywhere to get tortillas or chiles. I promised him to open a store, so he wouldn't have to worry anymore. La Costenita has been in business for almost 12 years. We opened on October 8th, 2008. Why Hillsborough? Because I wanted my cousin not to miss the smells, the flavors, the food with which we grew up with in Mexico.

Q: What has your experience been from owning this business in Hillsborough and has it been what you expected?

A: I didn't know what to expect as everything was new for me. When I started having problems opening La Costenita, I thought it was normal. This has been a path full of learning, having the opportunity to meet very interesting people throughout this journey.

Q: What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of owning your business?

A: Contrary to what people may think, "She has all the time in the world," "she's the boss," "she hardly ever works," time is one of the biggest challengers. Being a small business, your limitations are big. You don't have the same resources as a large company. If an employee leaves, you, the boss, are the replacement. If someone gets sick, you are also the replacement. Consequently, you miss some family celebrations.

Q: Given the challenges of owning a small business, and the hard work involved, what motivates you every day?

A: My children. I want to be an example of perseverance, dedication, and hard work. I know they will have their own challenges, but I hope that through me, they will learn that they can achieve their goals as I have. Especially the barriers I have overcome as a woman, a Latina, an immigrant, and with English as my second language.

Q: COVID-19 has obviously impacted all businesses in some way, and has been the toughest on small businesses. What challenges has it brought to your business and how have you dealt with them?

A: The uncertainty of not knowing what awaited us, the fear that caught us facing the new way to do basically anything. Seeing how sales went down every day, and workers afraid of getting sick. Of course, I was also worried about not having enough resources to cover all the expenses.

Q: Moving to a more positive topic, October is "Women's Small Business Month." As a woman business owner, what are you most proud of?

A: To think that, against all odds and setbacks, La Costenita has been open for almost 12 years. That is something that I am very proud of.

Q: What is the best advice you have been given? What advice would you give to a woman looking to start her own business?

A: I have received a lot of advice, all very important. One of the best: “fake it until you make it.” My advice for any woman would be to follow your instincts, believe it, and do it with all your passion.

Q: What do you envision for your Hillsborough business going forward?

A: I would like to see La Costenita being able to offer good customer service while providing quality cuisine to everyone in this town and its surroundings (without me).

Q: Any final comments or thoughts you would like to share?

A: When Charles Ruggieri, EBDC Chairman, spoke to me about this topic, I thought, why do they want to recognize me? I have not done anything important, but, it is platforms like this one will help women of any background to have hope that, with effort and dedication, they can achieve their goals. What only remains to say is thank you, thank you so much for letting me part of this project.

**La Costeñita**

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