

**2010 RHODE ISLAND AND NEW ENGLAND
SBA YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR**

**GREAT TRAINING AND SBA-BACKED FINANCING
HELPED MAKE YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR'S BUSINESS
DREAMS BECOME A REALITY**

As a teenager Rebecca Baton knew she wanted to be involved in the cosmetology industry. She worked weekends at her aunt's salon greeting customers and cleaning the shop. From that early experience Rebecca had the opportunity as a senior in high school to intern at a small salon in Narragansett. She was enrolled in the Cosmetology Careers Program. Those early experiences led Baton to open her own salon and later purchase a building and expand her reach into two South County communities. Quite an accomplishment for a young woman in her twenties!

Soon after graduating from Chariho Regional High School, Rebecca worked in a number of salons for five years but maintained a dream of salon ownership. The opportunity presented itself in 2006 when she purchased an existing salon in a rented space in Exeter. Rebecca's dream became a reality when Rebecca's Salon and Day Spa was created with the assistance of a SBA-backed Express Loan from Westerly Community Credit Union.

Rebecca soon learned the trials and tribulations that can often accompany renting commercial space. She experienced leaks in the ceiling, rotting window sills, inadequate lighting and poor security that resulted in break-ins. Baton needed space that not only was safe for her and her four employees, but also for her clients.

Meanwhile, in April 2008, Rebecca opened a second salon, Rebecca's 2, in 600 square feet of rented space in Charlestown, R.I. This was made possible with a second SBA-backed loan from Westerly Community Credit Union. Baton gave the space a complete face lift with two stations and new lighting. The salon offers complete hair service and manicures and pedicures.

Despite operating two successful salons, Rebecca wanted to reach the next plateau as an entrepreneur. She hoped eventually to purchase a building that would give her more control over the business environment and provide more creative power. In September 2009, Rebecca achieved that goal by purchasing a commercial building on Route 2 in Exeter. She obtained an SBA 7(a) loan through Coastway Community Credit Union. The purchase enabled Rebecca to close the rented space in Exeter and move to the new location.

The rented space was in a shopping center with poor visibility. Her new location is free-standing and has sufficient space for future expansion. The new location also provides opportunities for Rebecca to offer more services to her clients such as new techniques in coloring and styling, waxing, manicures and pedicures, massages and facials. Rebecca's Salon and Day Spa now offers all of the amenities she needed to have to keep her clients happy and entice new

clients to visit her salon. They include a retail line such as scarves, handbags, jewelry and accessories.

Another consideration was her desire to have the business stand above her competition, something she felt was critical in a struggling economy. Rather than follow the competition by raising prices, Rebecca understands that maintaining competitive pricing and expanded services for clientele that may have reduced disposable income because of the economic conditions, will ultimately result in steady business. This will help not only her to survive these challenging times, but will also benefit the eight stylists and technicians that work for her.

Rebecca also understands the importance of marketing and the opportunities that exist in her community. She offers discounts to Chariho High School and University of Rhode Island students, and employees of nearby businesses like American Power Conversion and Carsousel Industries.

Rebecca also gives back to the community for their support of her two salons. She donates to local animal shelters and local schools. In conjunction with the grand opening celebration for her new location, Rebecca conducted a food drive to benefit the Rhode Island Food Bank.

For her demonstrated success and potential for future growth, the U.S. Small Business Administration is pleased to honor Rebecca L. Baton as the 2010 Rhode Island and New England SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year.