

A start-up small candy shop finds sweet success with help from SCORE

When Donna Klim first visited her local SCORE chapter in 1998, she wasn't contemplating small business ownership: She had already decided to buy a Candy Bouquet franchise. Now she needed the small business experts at SCORE to help her refine her business plan and secure a start-up loan.

Donna's decision to open her small business via the Candy Bouquet International franchise was near-perfect. Candy Bouquet International has been listed in *Entrepreneur* magazine's Top 100 Franchises for six years in a row, from 1999 to 2004. Candy Bouquet's featured product is a custom, handmade bouquet of gourmet candies and chocolates: It looks like a fancy floral bouquet, but it lasts much longer – and tastes a lot sweeter.

Donna first attended a SCORE business seminar, and in the summer of 1999, SCORE counselors assisted her in securing an SBA 7(a) guaranteed loan for \$40,000 with BB&T Bank. SCORE counselor Don Boyd assisted her in reworking and refining her business plan to fully benefit from the SBA-guaranteed financing.

After several years in business, Donna relocated her growing store to Summerville, where she has continued to expand her product lines to include Charleston Giftbaskets and nine varieties of fresh fudge made in store.

When a new Candy Bouquet store opened in Mount Pleasant, Donna became the new business owner's mentor as she entered the world of Candy Bouquet.

Donna's Candy Bouquet store was named the 2004 Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year, and Donna herself was named the Greater Summerville-Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Quarter in 2004.