



Retirement leads to Queen Beedz with the SBDC's support

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EDWARDSVILLE - Susan Hackney was looking for a creative outlet as she eased her way into retirement. A lifelong learner, she decided the extra time on her hands provided the opportunity to learn new skills. Having an interest in growing her passion for jewelry making into a business, she learned about the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

She first attended the SBDC's monthly workshop "Starting a Small Business" that was held earlier in the year. The workshop provided the information and tools necessary to develop an idea and start a business in Illinois. The workshop inspired Hackney to create Queen Beedz, and pursue her jewelry-making hobby beyond her friends and family inner circle.

Queen Beedz's mission is to create high-quality bracelets, earrings, necklaces and accessories. The jewelry is made of superior gems and Swarovski crystals. She also offers customizable pieces, which include custom colors, sizes and matching sets. Hackney puts love, time and effort into each piece she creates and is focused on building relationships with her customers.

Illinois SBDC Director Jo Ann Di Maggio May helped Hackney create her business plan and strategize through the process of completing the registration for her business. May also referred her to attorneys, accountants, gave expertise on marketing and other business matters.

Hackney said, "Jo Ann gave straight answers during the Starting a Small Business in Illinois Workshop which gave me clear directions to my next step to pursue my business idea. She was very helpful and responsive. Her expertise was greatly appreciated."

"Susan has worked hard to make her business a reality, and I wish her much success," said Di Maggio May. "The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE is always here to help Queen Beedz as it grows and blossoms into a household name."

Hackney wears many hats in her business, since she is the only one who makes jewelry and takes care of any business responsibilities. She strives to offer her existing and future customers a one of a kind service. She has learned from her work experience that giving unique customer service is valuable to the business and for the consumers.

She is actively seeking partnerships with local boutiques to carry her handmade jewelry.

Queen Beedz hosted Autumn Bling Fling on Sunday, Nov. 12, in Collinsville. Hackney also attended the Immaculate Conception Craft Fair on Saturday, Dec. 2 in Columbia. Hackney plans to host an event in spring 2018 to bring together other local crafters who make jewelry, textiles and more.

For more information on Queen Beedz's products and events, visit Facebook.

The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East assists start-up ventures like Queen Beedz as well as existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is funded in

part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and SIUE as a service to Illinois small businesses.

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs and encouraging new investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the SIUE School of Business and the University at large.

To learn about the SBDC, contact the IL SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE at (618) 650-2929.