
Sharing SBLA Success Stories

EATONIA SMALL BUSINESS LOAN CO-OPERATIVE LTD.

TEA AND TASSEL ON FIRST DONNA LOTHAMMER

Starting and owning your own business in rural or “small town” Saskatchewan can be exciting and challenging. To be successful, you need to have an optimistic attitude, a strong work ethic and a positive support group to surround you. Your gift or talent and motivation should always stir you into the business you’ll excel at.

A love of home decorating, cooking, baking, and retail sales propelled Donna Lothammer to open her tea house, “Tea and Tassel on First,” two-and-a-half years ago. She keeps a home-like atmosphere for her guests, who have come to expect the one-on-one service they receive.

There are a few tourist attractions in the area, and Lothammer felt there was a need for a gift shop and eatery to service tourist and locals. She wanted it to be interesting enough to keep customers coming back, not only once but again and again.

Combining a menu of homemade lunches, desserts and a wide array of non-alcoholic beverages, along with an opportunity to shop for a variety of gifts, artisan works and antiques, has created a recipe for success. Her guests may browse through the eight rooms of unique gift items and linger for lunch or tea. They can even place an evening booking for desserts or dinner (for eight to 24 guests).

“As long as my creative juices keep flowing, I keep doing what I love, for the heart of Tea and Tassel is my decorative and creative flair,” says Lothammer.

“I believe whatever a person loves and is good at will sustain them through the ‘dry’ times. I may be open 35 - 45 hours a week or more, depending on bookings. After-hours can be very busy with food preparation, shopping, ordering, pricing, cleaning, redisplaying, yard work and the dreaded paper work.”

Lothammer finds that there are quiet moments and times when she and her staff are run off their feet. She employs one to two other people, whose jobs vary from doing kitchen work, waiting tables, pricing, computer entry to attending tradeshow.

“Advertising is a must,” she says, “and word-of-mouth has been found to be the best form of advertising and the least expensive! I have a solid local core of regular clients, but I also depend on the surrounding towns of Leader, Eston, Kindersley, Flaxcombe, Coleville, Mantario, Alsask, etc. Groups from Brock, Fiske, Rosetown, Empress,

Luseland and Saskatoon, as well as others, have graced my tea house. A common phrase spoken by our urban friends is, *“You would never find a place like this in the city!”*

Lothammer stated that without the financial assistance of Eatonia Small Business Loan Co-operative Ltd., she would not have had the freedom and confidence to start her business. “I believe this assistance provided by the Small Business Loans Program is a wonderful support and encouragement to rural business, and a great source of financing. I am grateful for their help.”

Information submitted by Eatonia Small Business Loan Co-operative Ltd.
