

HAWAI'I SBDC SUCCESS STORY

Keiki Sitters



After losing her job as an escrow agent in 2007, Kathy Custer posted an online ad offering to babysit in hopes of providing some income while she searched for another job. Her idea received an overwhelming response, and after some 9 months of market research and planning, Keiki Sitters was born.

Beginning with childcare at private homes, Kathy expanded Keiki Sitters to care for children of tourists via contracts with more than half of the hotel properties on O'ahu.

Five years later, Kathy had decided to sell her business, and came to the Oahu office of the Hawai'i SBDC Network for guidance. The SBDC helped Kathy create a viable financial reporting system which supported calculation of a fair selling price for the business. Subsequently, the potential buyer had a change

in plans, and the sale did not proceed. The initial disappointment, however, spawned opportunities to work on expanding her business.

Keiki Sitters had done work with the military, and the large military presence in Hawai'i foreshadowed the possibility of much more. The SBDC, in partnership with Hawaii P-TAC, was able to help Kathy secure several baby-sitting engagements at military installations as a subcontractor to a large national prime contractor. Keiki Sitters flawlessly executed these engagements, and the prime contractor asked Kathy to take on similar work in Texas. That work is now expanding into Tennessee and other states.

The increased amount of business, and the complications of doing business in more than one state required upgrading her original financial reporting system. With the SBDC's assistance, QuickBooks was employed in this role. The financial information needed for insight and management of her expanding business was now made available.

Keiki Sitters contracts with nearly five hundred women, affording them the opportunity to get out of the house, interact with other mothers and children, and earn money as well.

In 2014, Kathy received the SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the State of Hawaii.

