



beachgreens

Long Beach, CA

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Los Angeles Regional Network



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SUCCESS STORY #405:

GROWING A HEALTHY BUSINESS

**Small Business Development Center
hosted by Long Beach City College**

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BEFORE:

When Long Beach native Aliye Aydin was diagnosed with a chronic kidney disease at age 15, her doctor recommended changing her diet. Little did she know this advice would change her life in more ways than one. Fifteen years later, Aydin is free of kidney disease and shares her passion for healthy, natural food with others via her business, *beachgreens*, which delivers organic, sustainably and locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to homes and businesses in the Long Beach area.

BEST ADVICE:

When Aydin came to the Long Beach City College SBDC in the summer of 2007, she had plenty of food industry experience—including working on organic farms, in restaurants, as a personal chef and caterer, and as a cooking instructor. She was bubbling over with ideas for a business that would combine her love of cooking, farming and gardening, but wasn't sure where to start. SBDC Business Advisors helped her clarify her business ideas, figure out what permits and licenses she needed, choose a legal structure for the business, make financial projections and develop a marketing strategy.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Focus.** "I went in with quite a few ideas," Aydin explains. "[The SBDC Business Advisor] asked me some hardball questions: 'Are you going to make money with that? Is that a hobby, or a business?' That really helped me narrow down what I wanted to do and didn't want to do."
- **Use word-of-mouth.** Word-of-mouth was Aydin's most useful marketing tool when she started her business, and SBDC Business Advisor George Mehale advised her to "keep doing what you're doing." In 2009, she took word-of-mouth to the next level by enlisting social media. "I started a blog, started Tweeting and started Facebooking—and that has definitely helped," Aydin says. "I've seen my following grow, as well as my customers."
- **Find a cheerleader.** SBDC Business Advisor George Mehale provided invaluable encouragement. "George had been in the food business and spoke my language," Aydin recalls. "He was always positive from the get-go, even when I only had 10 customers. I didn't have formal [business] training and I felt pretty self-conscious about that. His support and gentle prodding really helped me."

AFTER:

Aydin made her first delivery in October 2007. Since she began meeting with the SBDC, *beachgreens* has grown from five customers to 120. Aydin now has two part-time employees, and in 2009 alone, her sales grew 20 percent.

Aydin recently met with an SBDC Marketing Consultant, and plans to refine her Web site, enhance her use of social media and start advertising on local radio. Her long-term goals? "To keep growing."