

### Watertown SBDC Client Success Story: School Daze

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J. Ben Primicias has been in the school supply business for a long time. He opened his first store with the assistance of the Watertown SBDC in the downtown shopping district in 1991, selling a variety of educational items for teachers and parents. Ben's wife Susan, a first grade teacher helped him expand his product line.

In 1996 Ben returned to the SBDC for assistance in buying property and building a structure with more room for inventory and better parking. The expansion required that he add new employees. Most of Ben's in-store business is from local teachers, school representatives and parents, but his catalog has generated sales from across the country and overseas and account for nearly half his total sales.



In 2008 after consulting with the SBDC, Ben built an attached seasonal ice cream stand called Cool Craze, which serves 24 flavors of soft serve ice cream and 32 flavors of hard ice cream. By 2015, Ben was considering closing the business and retiring because of increased competition with state contracts and Amazon for the items he sells. He talked to Advisor Robin Stephenson about leasing his building, but then she informed him that as a native Filipino he qualified as a minority vendor. It took nearly a year of perseverance, but he finally received NYS certification as an MWBE business, which enabled him to have access to more purchase orders/contracts. Since receiving certification his revenues have increased in excess of \$393,000. Ben has now decided to put retirement on the back burner and add more employees to assist with the increase in orders.