



News Release

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Woman Small Business Owner Crosses Finish Line Every Day

Brooklyn, NY--- For Kirsten Marino, the owner of Slope Sports, a specialty footwear and clothing store for women runners, the satisfaction she gets each day is akin to that of a runner crossing the finish line. That's because she's living her dream of being a small business owner.

Marino had harbored the dream of being an entrepreneur from her college days. But after graduation she began a career in banking and worked in downtown Manhattan. Ten years ago the avid runner had one false start toward her dream by putting together a business plan for a women's sporting goods catalog. For any number of reasons she decided her idea wasn't the right thing at the right time and she abandoned her concept.

Fast forward seven years and Marino is now married and moved from Manhattan to Park Slope, Brooklyn, in the typical New Yorker's never-ending quest for more living space. Marino soon discovers that there is no business in the area serving her needs and those of other women runners. The entrepreneurial bug bites her again.

Marino formulates another business plan--- this time for a women's specialty running store. She does her research by counting the number, and observing the footwear, of runners circling nearby Prospect Park. She also begins scouting vacant storefronts and the foot traffic in the culturally diverse neighborhood. Trying to leave little to chance, she also seeks out the assistance of the U.S. Small Business Administration's SCORE organization. SCORE provides free one-to-one counseling from experienced business executives.

With SCORE's help Marino fine-tuned her business plan over the course of 5 months. She also applied for an SBA loan prequalification letter which helped her secure a \$125,000 loan from HSBC bank. "SCORE counselor Charlie Sobel took an active interest in my idea from the very start," said Marino. "We met regularly throughout the summer to work on my business plan and he even brought in other SCORE counselors with expertise in retail, inventory and pricing to help me. I've been able to realize my goal because of SCORE and Mr. Sobel. Other business owners should be taking advantage of their service," added Marino.

With the loan and her own investment of \$60,000, Marino opened Slope Sports in January 2003 on Seventh Avenue. Business has been good for Marino with revenues tracking upward

approximately 20 percent each month since opening. Slope Sports is also scheduled to be profiled in Footwear News, one of the industry's major trade publications.

"I'm satisfying my entrepreneurial desire while bringing a needed service to my neighborhood," said Marino. Women no longer have to cross to river to Manhattan or travel across the entire borough for the running gear they need. I'm selling products in the language women understand and which I think may be lacking in most sporting goods stores."

Marino also involves Slope Sports in the community by sponsoring local road races. "I'm fulfilling my dream every day and it's been very rewarding," said Marino.

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Slope Sports is located at 70 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn, NY. All of the SBA's programs and services are provided to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. For more information about the SBA please visit www.sba.gov/ny/ny