

CARIBBEAN E-OUTLOOK

September 2011

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Helping small businesses **start, grow** and **succeed.**



Your Small Business Resource

SBA ANNOUNCES BLU CARIBE IS PART OF 'SBA 100'

SBA 100 Highlights Businesses that are Growing, Creating Jobs with SBA Assistance

BLU Caribe is one of the 'SBA 100' companies, U.S. Small Business Administration Region II Regional Administrator Jorge Silva-Puras recently announced.

BLU Caribe, a pharmaceutical company in Dorado that specializes in the manufacturing and distribution of generic tablets, hired nearly 100 employees upon establishing operations last year, and went on to create 140 additional jobs – thanks to financial assistance under the SBA's 504 Certified Development Company loan program.

The SBA 100 features one hundred businesses that have created at least 100 jobs since receiving SBA assistance. Descriptions and a photograph gallery of each of the SBA 100 companies can be found at www.sba.gov/100.

"We are proud to induct BLU Caribe into the SBA 100," said SBA Regional Administrator Jorge Silva-Puras during a tour of the facility. "Today, hundreds of individuals are employed and contribut-

owned firm that focuses on the manufacturing and distribution of high quality generic pharmaceuticals at competitive prices. A couple of years ago, BLU Pharmaceuticals president William 'Bill'



BLU Caribe Manufacturing Manager Angélica Matos (front) and General Manager Sandra Rodríguez-Toledo take a moment while explaining the tablet granulation process during the SBA 100 tour of the pharmaceutical facilities.

Luster was looking for a new solid dosage facility to manufacture generic pharmaceutical products as part of its growth strategy.

Luster's search for new business opportunities resulted in the purchasing of a 145,000

square foot production plant in Dorado that became available when generic pharmaceuticals firm Biovail decided to transfer its manufacturing operations to Steinbach, Canada, leaving hundreds of people unemployed.

ing to Puerto Rico's economy because BLU Caribe took advantage of opportunities available through SBA programs. The SBA 100 is all about recognizing job creation and business growth."

BLU Caribe is a subsidiary of Kentucky-based BLU Pharmaceuticals, LLC, a certified minority-

The SBA provided Luster with a \$3.6 million loan

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through the agency's 504 loan program, with the support of certified development company PYMES Financial Partners Corporation and third-party lender Economic Development Bank for Puerto Rico. BLU Caribe began operations in April 2010, re-hiring close to 100 of Biovail's former employees and producing the first batches of the generic antibiotic ciprofloxacin for the U.S. market. Since opening day, BLU Caribe has grown to 280 employees and plans to continue hiring.

"The SBA's 504 loan program is one of the agency's best resources for job creation and economic development," Silva-Puras said.

The 'SBA 100' companies include businesses in a variety of industries, from manufacturing, to food and beverage, to shipping. Each business received SBA support in the form of capital, contracting, counseling or investment before going on to create at least 100 jobs.

The SBA provides small businesses with the tools and resources they need to grow and create jobs. The 'SBA 100' is a cross-section of the diverse array of businesses that stand to benefit from SBA assistance. With the help of SBA, the SBA 100 companies have succeeded and created thousands of jobs across America. ♦

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Welcome to another edition of *Caribbean E-Outlook*!

As we reach the end of this fiscal year, we are excited about all that we have accomplished. In these pages, you will read about some great SBA success stories—extraordinary entrepreneurs that have worked tirelessly to make their dream of small business ownership a reality.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our district office staff for its incredible efforts and dedication over the past 12 months. I am truly proud to work along-

side such a great time of professionals who invest countless hours to ensure the communities that we serve are equipped with the tools and resources they need to continue creating the jobs our economy needs to move forward.

Also, a big thank-you to all of our resource partners and participating lenders; you have all done a tremendous job this year in advancing the interests of small businesses in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

We look forward to our next fiscal year, and to



District Director José R. Sifontes

reaching the goals that lie ahead.

Until then,



SBA St. Croix Officer in Charge Carl Christensen conducts an overview of SBA Government Contracting programs, as part of a Business Matchmaking

event held recently in both St. Thomas and St. Croix, Virgin Islands.

The third in a series of Matchmakers conducted

this year in the PR&VI district, the St. Thomas event counted with the presence of Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen and attracted over 30 business owners seeking to do business with the federal government. Participating with the SBA were the U.S. Army National Guard, the U.S. General Services Administration, the VI Economic Development Authority, and the VI Department of Public Works. ♦

SBA SOLICITS NOMINATIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS

The time has arrived to submit nominations for the 2012 Small Business Week awards. A complete list of all award categories, nomination criteria, guidelines and forms may be accessed at www.nationalsmallbusinessweek.com. All nominations must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands district office no later than **November 10, 2011** to the attention of Angelique Adjutant, U.S. Small Business Administration, 273 Ponce de León Ave, Plaza Scotiabank Suite 510, San Juan, PR 00917. ♦

PHARMACIST LOOKS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO AID THE CHRONICALLY ILL

It takes a special kind of person to offer a healing touch to someone suffering from a chronic or catastrophic disease. To nearly 4,000 individuals in Puerto Rico, that person is Enid Santiago-Aponte.

Born in New York City, Santiago arrived in Puerto Rico at the age of four, and was raised in her parents' hometown of Florida –the last town on the island to be named a municipality. Santiago knew she wanted to be a pharmacist since she was in the seventh grade and in 1987, after graduating from the School of Pharmacy of the University of Puerto Rico's Medical Sciences Campus in Río Piedras, she provided a government-required year of public service as a pharmacist to the Manatí Area Hospital.

"I met medical sales representatives on a daily basis," Santiago says. "Two months before I completed my service, one of them suggested that I would be good in that field, and I went for an interview at American Cyanamid."

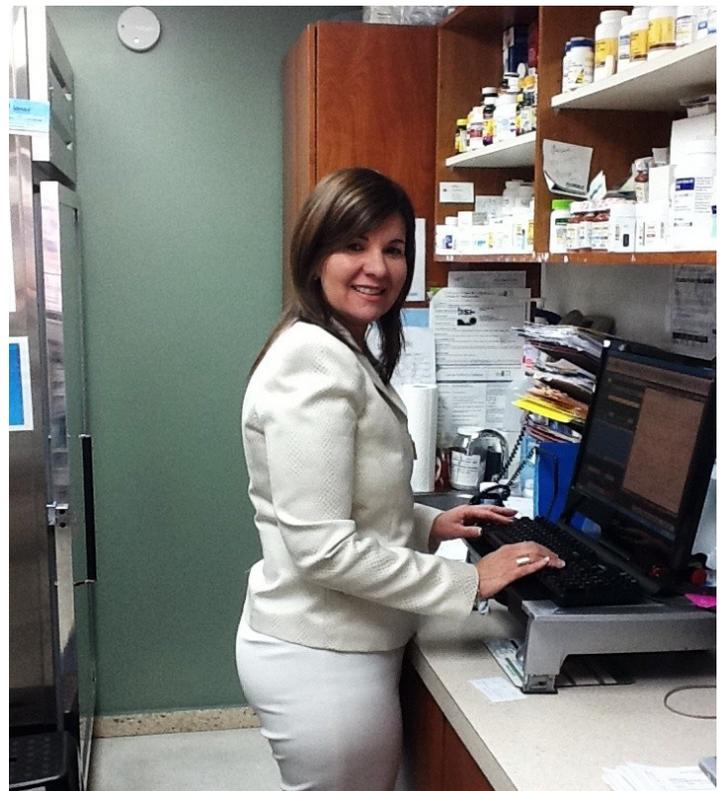
Santiago got the job and worked at the pharmaceutical company for three years before she was recruited by Bristol-Myers Squibb, a move that would eventually change the course of her life and her career. During the 14 years Santiago worked for Bristol, she held various positions, from

sales representative and district manager to marketing manager and senior account executive of managed healthcare or direct care. This last role would define Santiago's future.

"While working in the area of managed care I visited a specialty pharmacy, and instantly fell in love," Santiago declares. "I liked the idea of having close contact with the patient, of going that extra mile to help the patient obtain his or her medication."

Over Christmas in 2004, a friend of Santiago's said to her "this is your moment, go for it". Inspired by her parents, both of whom suffer from chronic diseases, and encouraged by her friend, Santiago lost no time in going online to research the concept and structure of a specialty pharmacy. She worked at the pharmaceutical company during the day and spent her nights designing a business plan, later hiring an economist to help her with its financial aspects.

In July 2005, Santiago created SPS Specialty Pharmacy Services Inc., which would be engaged in the preparation and distribution of specialty pharmaceuticals to treat chronic diseases. In January 2006, she presented her business plan and loan proposal to Banco Popular de Puerto Rico and was soon approved for a \$750,000 loan under the U.S. Small Business Administration's 7 (a) Loan Guaranty program.



"In this type of business everything is very costly, and I will be eternally grateful for the trust the bank had in me," Santiago says.

Under the 7(a) program SBA can guarantee up to 85 percent on loans up to \$150,000 and up to 75 percent on loans higher than \$150,000 up to \$5 million.

With the loan proceeds, Santiago purchased equipment and inventory, and made improvements to a commercial building on Luis Muñoz Marín Avenue in Caguas that she had leased due to its ideal setting in one of the city's most traveled roads. The location is less than a mile away from the Inter-American Advanced Medi-

cine Hospital (HIMA by its Spanish acronym), providing patients with immediate access to treatment.

Santiago hired a pharmacy assistant, resigned from her job at Bristol on December 22, and on December 26, 2006 she opened the doors to SPS Specialty Pharmacy Services. Nevertheless, it took a few months before patients began to arrive.

"My first patient was my mom," Santiago recalls. "It took a while before people knew us, so during that time I hired another pharmacist and began distributing flyers and calling and visiting doctors."

At the same time, Enid's sister Mildred --also a li-

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censed pharmacist and former medical representative-- joined SPS, bringing with her a wealth of experience in the field. The Santiago sisters' previous experiences with doctors, in addition to SPS' home-delivery and infusion services, achieved great and fast acceptance from doctors. The business took off, and one year after opening day, SPS had served nearly 700 patients.

"I've had great acceptance from doctors," Santiago says. "Many of them already knew me from my days working at the pharmaceutical companies, so there was an established relationship."

In Puerto Rico, there are approximately 10 specialty pharmacies, all operating under a different model. What makes SPS stand out is the direct relationship it establishes with patients, dispatching pharmaceuticals expressly to their homes, and educating patients on the proper and correct use of medication. Specialty Pharmacy Services also serves homes for the aged, dispatching and refilling prescriptions. The pharmacy prides itself in offering excellent customer service to all patients and people from all walks of life, a significant aspect in its success.

"There are many prescriptions that arrive by fax directly from the doctor," Santiago says. "Patients don't necessarily have to come in to fill a prescription. I will deliver to any patient anywhere on the island, even in Vieques and Culebra."

Today, SPS Specialty Pharmacy Services employs 22 people and provides services to about 4,000 patients throughout the island, helping treat such diseases as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, and hepatitis, among others. The

PR & VI LOAN PRODUCTION AS OF AUG. 31, 2011

LENDER	LOANS	\$\$\$ VALUE
7(A) LOAN GUARANTY PROGRAM		
Banco Popular de Puerto Rico*	298	\$22,137,700
Banco Santander Puerto Rico	84	\$5,824,800
Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria	60	\$6,851,600
Economic Development Bank for PR	36	\$7,184,000
Scotiabank of Puerto Rico	15	\$650,000
Borrego Springs, N.A.	6	\$215,000
FirstBank*	5	\$516,000
Independence Bank	1	\$1,050,000
Live Oak Banking Company	1	\$800,000
TOTAL 7(A) LOANS * Includes loans in VI	506	\$45,229,100
CERTIFIED DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PROGRAM		
PYMES Financial Partners Inc.	38	\$15,489,000
COFECC	18	\$7,458,000
Marketing Small Business Finance Corp.	11	\$3,954,000
Puerto Rico Business Development Corp.	4	\$1,554,000
North Puerto Rico Local Development Co., Inc.	3	\$1,253,000
TOTAL CDC LOANS	74	\$29,708,000
GRAND TOTAL	580	\$74,937,100

business generates over \$12 million in annual revenues. The business has grown so steadily, in fact, that Santiago's next step is to purchase a lot that's even closer to HIMA Hospital and construct a larger commercial building where she can move the pharmacy.

When asked about the most satisfying moments of her business venture, Santiago points out "to have worked with excellent professionals who come in to do their jobs, people who

understand that if the business grows, they will grow." Then, the pharmacist goes on to talk about the significance of establishing direct contact with a patient, something not many pharmacists do, and of becoming someone the patient can rely on for support and comfort.

"To take a patient by the hand, and lend them a shoulder to cry on, to see happiness on the face of a patient I have helped, to serve others, that is my greatest satisfaction." ♦