

## SBA Builds Opportunity for Immigrant-Owned Entrepreneurs



*(Photo Caption) Karen Friel, DD; Natalia Olson-Urtecho, RA; Mr. and Mrs. Francisco Guerrero, Owners; Tim James, First Microloan of WV*

Francisco Guerrero, owner of El Rey Restaurants in Clarksburg and Fairmont, came to America from Mexico in the mid 1980's to have a better life for his family. He worked in the restaurant industry and decided he wanted to own his own restaurant in North-Central West Virginia.

Guerrero knew how the industry worked but had trouble securing financing to make his dream a reality. That quickly changed when a loan officer recommended he speak to Tim James, from First Microloan of West Virginia about an SBA microloan.

The U.S. Small Business Administration's microloan program provides small loans, up to \$50,000, to small business owners who may not qualify for traditional lending. The proceeds of a microloan can be used for working capital, or the purchase of furniture, fixtures, supplies, materials, and/or equipment. The program also provides training and technical assistance to micro-borrowers to help them successfully start or grow their business.

With the help of SBA's microloan program and counseling assistance he received from SBA's resource partner, the Small Business Development Center, Guerrero was able to open the first El Rey in Clarksburg July 22, 2013.

Shortly after opening his first restaurant in Clarksburg, Guerrero was ready to open a second location in North Central West Virginia. He once again turned to his friend, Tim James, at First Microloan of WV to expand his dream. Two years later to the day from when he opened his first restaurant, Guerrero opened his second El Rey restaurant in Fairmont, WV.

Rob Hinton, Guerrero's former SBDC coach, said, "I loved working with Francisco and helping make his dream become a reality. I've never met a harder working person than Francisco; he exemplifies the American Dream with his 'never quit' attitude. An honest, family-first man, with a passion for his culture and sharing that culture with others, he truly cares about people."

Small businesses, like El Rey, pack a big punch to the local economy. Guerrero is able to employ 22 area residents plus members of his family.

Guerrero says, “The help I received from the SBA was very important. I had no money to start my business but I had a lot of ideas. With the money I received I was able to bring those ideas to life.”

The SBA’s West Virginia District Office is located at 320 West Pike Street in Clarksburg, WV. If you are interested in starting or expanding your business contact the office at [wvinfo@sba.gov](mailto:wvinfo@sba.gov) or 304-623-5631.

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