



# News Release

ORANGE COUNTY/INLAND  
EMPIRE DISTRICT OFFICE

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## **Celia Gutierrez Vera and Javier Valencia Huante, Owners of Chela's Bakery, selected as 2020 Family Owned Small Business of the Year**

*Owners driven by family focus and work ethic*

**SANTA ANA, Calif.** – The U.S. Small Business Administration, Orange County / Inland Empire District Office is pleased to announce Celia Gutierrez Vera and Javier Valencia Huante, owners of Chela's Bakery, as the 2020 Family Owned Business of the Year. Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante were nominated for the award by Karla V. Gonzalez, a bilingual Business Consultant and Procurement Specialist at the Inland Empire Small Business Development Center (IESBDC) in Riverside, Calif.

Over twenty years ago, Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante immigrated to the United States from Mexico to provide a better life for themselves and their six children. The couple worked minimum wage jobs and decided to start their own bakery after their normal work hours to make extra income for their family. They decided to go "all in" and invested their entire savings, including disability income received from Mexico that was intended to be used for their funerals. It was no accident that they started a bakery. Baking was part of their family's tradition, as each of their parents were bakers in the state of Michoacán, Mexico. The couple was able to honor their families by continuing the tradition and by using family recipes, with only slight modifications needed based on available ingredients.

As the demand for their baked goods increased, Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante purchased more equipment to keep up with the growth. However, the equipment was too large for their location, so they decided it was time to open a new, larger location. When a local councilman, who was also a frequent customer, suggested the couple meet with the IESBDC to get help with growing their business, the couple had already identified a larger space that fit their needs less than one mile away and on a main street. To make the move, they would need assistance with understanding business loans and how to prepare a package to submit a request for financing. The IESBDC assisted the couple throughout the entire loan process. They identified lenders that would be able to do the loan deal, they helped them understand the process, and they worked together with them on creating a business plan with financial projections.

Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante successfully secured the funding they needed to purchase the commercial property, renovate their new location, and upgrade their equipment. The new location and equipment led to the creation of one new job, and helped the bakery retain eight other jobs. Shortly after, Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante's daughter was scheduled to open their third location. The family once again consulted with the IESBDC for assistance on how to proceed with permits and for help understanding the terms of the new lease. The IESBDC was able to guide them, and Chela's Bakery #3 celebrated their grand opening in November 2019, creating an additional six jobs in the community.

Despite the many challenges they faced with opening their first bakery, through hard work and perseverance Chela's Bakery has thrived. The family has opened three locations and they are looking forward to the future, with the potential to open new locations in the Inland Empire that will create more jobs, not just for their family, but for the community. Today Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante employ 13 of their own family members, making it a true family business. Gutierrez Vela's dream is for each of her children to open their own bakeries to help remind them that everything in life takes effort, patience, and hard work.

Chela's Bakery is a wonderful example of living the American dream after overcoming great challenges. The SBA Orange County / Inland Empire District is honored to recognize Gutierrez Vera and Valencia Huante, owners of Chela's Bakery, as the 2020 Family Owned Small Business of the Year.

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### **About the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in 1953 and is a Cabinet-level agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation. The SBA helps Americans start, build and grow businesses, and recover from disasters. Through an extensive network of field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations, the SBA delivers its services to people throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. To learn more about SBA, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

### **About the Orange County / Inland Empire District Office**

The Orange County / Inland Empire District Office, under the leadership and vision of J. Adalberto Quijada, District Director, is responsible for the delivery of SBA programs and services in the Southern California counties of Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Located in Santa Ana near John Wayne Airport, the office and its staff facilitate understanding and access to SBA loan programs; coordinate and conduct hundreds of training sessions and special events annually such as matchmaking forums and loan workshops; and manage a portfolio of nearly 100 businesses enrolled in the agency's 8(a) business development program.