

NALCAB Network Impact Story



Heavenly, Gifts by Liz



Heavenly, Gifts by Liz is a specialty store in Pelham, Alabama, founded by Liset Martinez. Liset received TA support, intensive training on business management, and valuable insights into effective marketing strategies from the dedicated staff at ¡HICA! to help her with her business.

In today's competitive business landscape, access to capital and resources can make all the difference for start-up entrepreneurs, particularly within the Latino community which has been historically marginalized and underinvested. Recognizing this pressing need, organizations like the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB) and member organization, Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (¡HICA!), play a crucial role in empowering underserved individuals to turn their business dreams into reality.

Recently, ¡HICA! received a \$105,000 grant from NALCAB, accompanied by extensive technical assistance (TA) and training to help strengthen ¡HICA!'s capacity to provide capital and small business development services, particularly to Latino-owned businesses in Alabama. This initiative also involved implementing new policies and procedures for ¡HICA!'s Camino Loan Fund, ensuring streamlined access to financial support for entrepreneurs.

One success story stemming from this collaboration is Heavenly, Gifts by Liz, a specialty gift store in Pelham, Alabama, owned by Liset Martinez. Before partnering with ¡HICA! in January 2022, Liset juggled multiple responsibilities as a working single mother and an accounting student at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. While working at Principe de Paz Catholic Church, Liset identified a lack of specialty stores catering to the Latino community's needs for religious and cultural events, so she set out to fill the gap in the community.

Over 15 months, Liset found support from the dedicated staff at ¡HICA! where they provided tailored TA to increase her credit score, intensive training on business management, and valuable insights into effective marketing strategies. Additionally, Liset was granted access to cultural events, allowing her to forge connections and enhance her business's visibility within the community.

In April 2023, Liset received a \$10,000 loan from ¡HICA!'s Camino Loan Fund. This critical investment served as the foundation for Heavenly, Gifts by Liz, enabling Liset to secure a storefront in a nearby retail center, cover initial rental costs, and procure essential inventory. With support from Wells Fargo, NALCAB, and ¡HICA!, Heavenly by Liz quickly became a beloved shopping destination for locals, positioning her as a community leader.

Initiatives like the Camino Loan Fund spearheaded by ¡HICA! and supported by NALCAB not only fuel economic growth but also foster a culture of inclusivity and resilience within Latino communities across the nation. As Heavenly, Gifts by Liz thrives, it stands as a testament to the impact of community support, access to resources, and the determination of those who chase their entrepreneurial dreams.