

The Women's Business Center of Cameron County (WBC-CC) nominates Martha Urteaga, owner of MMGreens, in Brownsville, Texas, for the 2017 U.S. Small Business Administration National InnovateHER: Innovating for Women Business Challenge. Urteaga, a mother of four and first-generation immigrant, is passionate about making healthy habit changes in the lives of Latino families in the Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas and eventually the entire Nation.

According to the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated population of the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Metropolitan area is 1.3 million, and approximately 90% are Hispanic. In 2006, the UTRGV (formerly UTPA) Health Office reported that the estimated diabetes prevalence rate in the RGV is 26%, compared to national rate of 7% reported by the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse in 2005.

MMGreens aims to offer nutritional and lifestyle guidance focused on Latino women and families; to help them make healthy habit changes through customized health coaching and products like natural cold-pressed juices and organic tamales. MMGreens plans are also to offer online health coaching services. Cold-pressed juices and organic tamale products are currently sold in person, via word of mouth. Urteaga plans are to sell these products online, to be delivered frozen, for easy storage in a refrigerator and a quick grab-and-go food choice.

At an early age, Urteaga began learning about healthy cooking from her mother, who taught her how to make tamales with a delicate, clean process, emphasizing the importance of quality ingredients when preparing dishes. She took this lesson and began creating organic tamales, replacing traditional ingredients like lard with coconut oil, using gluten-free dough instead of a starchy *masa*, mixed with cactus and spinach. MMGreens also produces a line of 100% organic cold-pressed juices with zero preservatives.

Urteaga is currently receiving training to become a Certified Health Coach, to diversify her business venture and better assist her clients. As a mother of four, Urteaga understands the pressure women face when having to balance work, living a healthy lifestyle and most importantly, taking care of a family; the premise of why MMGreens was created.

A panel of five judges, including representatives of the local university, economic development organizations, financial industry, and business consulting services, selected MMGreens as the local winner of the 2017 InnovateHER Challenge. The main reason why MMGreens placed first place, competing with three other contestants, is its meaningful objective of assisting Latino families in the path to having a healthier lifestyle and its potential for online commercialization.

There are many online health coaching services and business selling organic cold-pressed juices in existence, however MMGreens offers an innovative approach in terms of customizing products and services that appeal to the lifestyle of Latino women and families, to make a significant impact in their lives. The WBC-CC nominates Martha Urteaga for her dedication to improving eating habits and the overall health of Latino families in the U.S.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea M. Benton".

Andrea Figueroa Benton, Executive Director
Women's Business Center of Cameron County