



TACOS AL VAPOR.

Carlos Caudillo

“All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them”

Walt Disney


SBDC WIU QC

Success Story

Carlos Caudillo works as a forklift driver in East Moline. He has been in the industrial setting for a long time; however, the idea of running a small business has never been out of his mind. The blood of entrepreneurship runs in the family. In Mexico, the relatives of Carlos de Cueramaro, a small town in the state of Guanajuato, own a local chain of taquerías and restaurants. "Uncles and cousins encouraged me to set up my own taqueria here in the United States," said Carlos, whose family provided him with technical tools and knowledge to open a food business, "they shared their recipes and gave me advice to run my business." Because Carlos was determined to become his own boss, he sold his car and used his savings to buy a food truck and cover the costs of starting the business. He sought help and reached out to María Ontiveros, Mercado on Fifth organizer, and SBDC staff, who advised him on certifications, licenses, business registration, insurance, and other requirements for starting a business. Regarding the process, Carlos considers that determination is the key to success: "it is not difficult to start a business, but it takes time and you have to commit to it". With the support of his wife Martha and his daughter Krystal, Carlos saw his dream come true when he became a Mercado on Fifth food truck salesman. Mercado has been beneficial for Carlos' business aspirations as it has been a place for networking and promotion: "it opens the door to win new customers... while I was selling there, people showed interest in my food and frequently asked me where else I sell my tacos." Carlos takes every opportunity to sell in other places and markets. In its short time as an operating business, the Tacos al Vapor food truck has participated in several regional events: East Moline Fiesta Parade, Silvis Moonlight Parade and Festival, Kewanee Hot Dog Festival, and Moline Quad Cities Marathon. Last year was a very difficult year for Carlos and his business. The **COVID-19** crisis affected his sales and consequently his business and his family, but this did not make Carlos give up. So, he decided to implement a strategy to reduce expenses and adjust purchases. In addition, he decided to extend the sale days to include **Taco Tuesdays** outside the facilities of **Western Illinois University QC campus**. Carlos comments, "The University staff and especially Nicky Friedrichsen opened the doors for me to start my sales outside their facilities." Tacos al Vapor sees a promising future. As a true entrepreneur, Carlos is already thinking about expanding and diversifying the business.



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