“The Small Business Development Center was very helpful in terms of assisting with cash flow projections and a business plan. There were numerous details they advised me on and they also suggested some lending options. Their on-going help has been great!”

Beth Tully, Owner

| Name of Business: | Cocoa Dolce Artisan Chocolates |
| Owner: | Beth Tully, Master Chocolatier |
| Nature of Business | Premium artisan chocolates & confections, gelato and coffees |
| City: | Wichita |
| County: | Sedgwick |
| Phone: | 316 - 866 - 2906 |
| Web Site: | www.CocoaDolce.com |
| Business Structure: | LLC |
| Business Began: | October 2005 |
| Employees at Start Up: | 3 |
| Employees in 2007: | 14 |
| Sales in 2007: | $400,000 |
| 2008 Sales Forecast: | $700,000 |
| Start Up Capital: | $125,000 |
| Source of Initial Capital: | $25,000 K-SBA, $100,000-self |
| KSBDC Counselor: | Ken Elliott |

When Beth Tully came to the WSU KSBDC to launch her dream of going into business creating the highest quality chocolates and confections, little did she realize how popular it would become. Beth states, “I live my passion by creating delicious confections in small batches using the finest chocolate and freshest ingredients from around the world. Every creation is free from preservatives and processed ingredients. Each is designed to be a sensual taste experience.”

Beth had a vision of selling her artisan creations in a trendy and comfortable atmosphere that would encourage customers to linger. The idea has worked well, but Beth is modifying the concept a bit for future stores. Additionally, Beth sees opportunities with wines and cheeses, which would compliment the core products nicely.

Among some of the issues that Beth notes were more problematic than she anticipated, managing working capital was probably the biggest issue. “Cash is always an issue with a new business and managing the ups and downs is tough sometimes.” Another issue that Beth addressed is limitations of time and space. Once the chocolates are made they must be stored somewhere. Beth explains, “If you’re making a few hundred chocolates that’s not a problem, but at 40 – 50 thousand chocolates per month, space becomes an issue.” Storing enough raw materials (hundreds of pounds of imported Belgium chocolate) frequently means packing the store room clear to the ceiling tiles. Lastly, website design has been somewhat of a headache. But on the positive side, Beth states Cocoa Dolce has been lucky to have truly great employees and there has been lots of community support for the business. With little direct selling, business has grown exponentially.

So what’s in the cards for this up-and-coming business? Currently Beth’s products are being considered by a nationally recognized retailer of premium foods. In addition, a national chain of grocery stores is currently sampling her products in-store. Beth states that she has her eye on a second retail location, possibly in Overland Park. Beth gives a lot of the credit for her success to others, but credit also has to be given to her high-energy, enthusiasm and her infectious smile. The sky’s the limit for this budding entrepreneur!