

HAWAI‘I SBDC SUCCESS STORY - EAST HAWAI‘I CENTER



Jessica Cruzan had a dream: To make a living being creative and provide jobs in Hilo. Jessica has been an artisan for many years, designing and hand sewing a variety of items. One of her many jobs was stitching high-end bags at a leather studio in New Mexico. Much to her chagrin, a short time after moving to Hilo, her beautiful leather had mildewed.

Jessica tried a number of fabrics before she found a new type of cork fabric - gorgeous, durable, anti-microbial, and sustainable. Cork is the only tree whose bark can regenerate itself after each harvest, leaving the tree unharmed. By combining cork fabric with outdoor quality canvas Jessica makes wallets, clutches, handbags, bucket bags, totes and luggage from her little studio in Hilo under the **SewDaKine** label.

In 2015, Jessica launched an online crowdfunding campaign to raise awareness of her business and enough money to purchase a large quantity of cork fabric and hardware. Jessica is busy now, along with another seamstress and assistant, making bags which are sold throughout the islands. SewDaKine does piece work for other designers as well. East Hawai‘i SBDC has worked with Jessica to formalize her accounting, broaden her marketing and plan for more growth, as SewDaKine’s sales have significantly increased.

“I’m an artist, good at conceptualizing and creating a product. SBDC has helped by teaching me how to run my business. They’ve help me develop the skills I lack and referred me to other professionals who can help. With SBDC’s guidance my work has grown to a full-time business with an assistant and a part-time seamstress. This year I plan to expand sales beyond Hawai‘i and hire two more workers. This growth wouldn’t have been possible without the help of SBDC!”

