

Draper Girls Country Farm grows and expands into new markets and bolsters the economy by creating and retaining jobs.

Outline of Need: Travelers on Highway 35 through Oregon's Hood River Valley have been stopping in Parkdale/Mt. Hood at the Draper Farms fruit stand for decades. Theresa Draper, owner of Draper Girls country Farm, has been improving on the traditional offerings of this stand since the early 1980's. With the help of loyal friends and family members, Theresa had begun to expand and diversify the family operation by selling at urban farmers markets and producing non-pasteurized ciders. Unfortunately, exorbitant interest rates and payments on business debt ate up any new profits and the business did not have the working capital to bolster this expansion and keep the business afloat.



How Rural Development Helped: In her search for solutions, Theresa received excellent advising from Mary Merrill of the Small Business Development Center at Columbia Gorge Community College (SBDC). As she explored for financing for further expansion opportunities, Theresa met with Bill Fashing, the Economic Development Coordinator of Hood River County, who referred her to Mt. Hood Economic Alliance (MHEA) and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) for her financing needs. With loans from both organizations, Draper had the needed funds to

purchase additional equipment to store and transport products to additional markets and to free up additional working capital. This allowed her to hire additional staff and have a selling presence at these markets.

Due to loans secured from MCEDD and MHEA, Draper Girls Country Farm is selling ciders, fruit and other products at markets in Lake Oswego, Milwaukie and other Oregon and Washington locations. Draper's specialty products include blended non-pasteurized ciders with flavors, such as cherry/apple and apple/pear.

USDA Rural Development provided the low interest loan funds to MCEDD for its revolving loan fund that is used to offer loans to small existing businesses and start up businesses.

The Results: Now people across Oregon and Washington will be able to enjoy the healthy and palette pleasing fruits, ciders and other products from Draper Girls Country Farms. MCEDD and MHEA have helped Draper Girls Country Farms grow and expand into new markets and bolster the economy by creating jobs. Recently, Theresa told MCEDD staff that she is very excited because she has been able to expand beyond what she thought possible and is selling at urban farmers markets. She is very grateful to everyone for all their help making it possible to grow her business, even in this difficult economy.