

GROWING MY RICE CAKE BUSINESS

I wanted to send my son on a mission, but selling one kilo (2 lbs.) of *bibingka* (rice cakes) a week wasn't enough to be able to support him on a mission.

My son helped the family financially and was too worried about our financial condition to feel comfortable leaving. It was a constant struggle for our family to make money. I was proud of my 25-year-old son for his righteous desire to serve the Lord, but I realized that we would need some kind of miracle to make his dream of serving a mission come true.

I joined a self-reliance group. By being proactive and exercising my faith, I knew that my family would be blessed. During one meeting, I was prompted to go to a public market. There, I saw many women selling native snacks. I made a deal with one woman. I told her I would leave my products in the morning for her to sell and collect the profits at the end of the day. The arrangement was beneficial to both of us. I soon found more sellers. My business grew to 10 sellers during my time in the self-reliance group.

I learned to separate my personal money from my business money and pay myself a salary. I learned to stop spending time making products that didn't sell and focus instead on what was profitable. I also learned about marketing with social media. My action partner from the self-reliance group helped me create a Facebook account. From there, we learned about branding and packaging. My business eventually grew to the point that my husband could quit his physically



GAINING SELF-RESPECT THROUGH SELF-RELIANCE

demanding job and work with me.

Someone recently asked me how my sales were going. I proudly told him I am now selling 12 kilos (26 lbs.) of rice cakes.

“12 kilos a week is great!” he said.

“No, brother,” I said. “I sell 12 kilos *per day*.”

My son later told me he was happy that my business could now provide for our needs.

“Looks like I can serve a full-time mission now,” he said.

He is now serving in the Philippines San Pablo Mission. I am so grateful for the self-reliance initiative. The Lord truly meant it when He said, “It is my purpose to provide for my saints” (D&C 104:15). ■

Lordita Yagomyom, Misamis Occidental, Philippines

During one self-reliance group meeting, I was prompted to go to a public market. I made a deal with one woman to sell my rice cakes.

I was married, I had three kids, and I was unemployed. A work drought left me feeling hopeless. I worried about the safety of my family, and I stopped believing in myself.

My wife, Carla, encouraged me to attend a self-reliance group. It was embarrassing for me to admit that I didn’t have work, but she encouraged me to attend the group so I could take care of our family.

I reluctantly gave it a try. While attending the group, I realized that my English skills could be a valuable asset in the job world. I had studied English on my mission, but I only knew how to speak about religion. I enrolled in English classes offered by the Church to improve my vocabulary. When I returned home from English class one day, Carla handed me the phone.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” she replied. “They’re speaking in English.”

It was a human resources representative from one of the biggest

companies in Costa Rica asking to interview me. I was stunned, but the interview went remarkably well. I later learned that Carla had set up the interview.

I got the job, and I remembered how my self-reliance group had helped me. Then I thought about how I could better apply what I learned. I started looking for an even better job and got one. Then I worked toward starting my own construction business.

I can’t imagine where my family and I would be without the start we received from the self-reliance initiative. I learned to be humble and to ask the Lord for help. I also learned to allow those who wanted to help me to bless my life. We have so many blessings. I now have self-respect, and I can bless my family with the money I earn. I know the Spirit blesses us when we are humble. ■

José Alberto Navas (as told to Miriam Sweeney), San José, Costa Rica

