



this woman means business!

Last year REDBOOK teamed up with Count-Me-In, the country's largest microfunder of female small-business owners, to offer one qualified reader a low-interest \$10,000 loan (double the organization's usual dollar cap for a first loan).

Women from all over the U.S. applied—from a candy maker to a doggy-day-care provider—and Jennifer Manriquez. A bilingual language instructor for toddlers and pre-schoolers, was awarded the loan. Manriquez immediately put the money toward producing her first teaching video, Spanish for Children. So far, the Canton, MI, mom has sold more than 200 copies of the video (available at bilinguafun.com) and has just released the second installment, Spanish for Children 2.

Manriquez, a former Spanish teacher, started her company, Bilingual Fun, three years ago out of her living room. She hosted an informal bilingual playgroup for her then 6-month-old daughter, Emily Rose, and five other kids. Using her teaching know-how, she went on to run classes for parents and toddlers in rented space at her local church.

But time in the classroom wasn't enough for Manriquez. "I wanted to create materials so that parents could reinforce my lessons at home," she says. To transform her company from a side project to a financially viable business, she applied for the REDBOOK/Count-Me-In loan.

Today, Manriquez's student body has grown to almost 60—including now 4-year-old Emily Rose and her 2-year-old brother, Aaron. Manriquez used some of the loan money to hire another teacher to lighten her class load while she works on the company's website and creates more teaching materials, such as her bilingual videos.

"We started the company with just ideas and enthusiasm, and suddenly I'm a business owner!" Manriquez says. "This loan has let me think bigger. Before, my vision for Bilingual Fun was limited. But now I never think, I can't do that."

Going forward, Manriquez plans to create more videos, as well as bilingual games and books. She'd also like to franchise once her children are older. "Wouldn't it be fun if Manriquez was the next Montessori?" she says. That's the kind of thinking Count-Me-In funds—and REDBOOK applauds.