

# Celebrating Success

COCC's Small Business Development Center 541-383-7290

**Michi Designs**  
**Brian & Michelle Nicholson**  
[www.michidesigns.com](http://www.michidesigns.com)  
**Employees: 9**

Brian Nicholson and spouse Michelle co-own Michi Designs, headquartered in Bend, where their team of nine handcraft fashionable lighting and accent furniture from a variety of materials including metal, wood, glass, acrylic and natural stone. Their products adorn hospital, hotel and home interiors across the country.

Operating since 1985, the Nicholson's acquired Michi Designs in 2006 upon relocating from southern California. "We wanted a manufacturing business and a great place to work and raise our family," said Michelle. "Michi and Bend provided the perfect combination."

Soon after settling in Bend, Brian enrolled in the Small Business Management Program (SBM) through COCC's Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Along with a cohort of other business owners looking towards making business improvements, Brian has participated in the program's unique combination of one-on-one advising combined with monthly business classes. Michi Designs has improved performance in areas such as finance, marketing, operations and management best practices. "We look into each business with an analytical, objective eye," explains SBM instructor Jim Wilcox. "Of equal importance, we engage in conversations that encourage the owners to express their ideas, dreams and concerns. They really appreciate having an outlet and receiving feedback."



## Partnership with the SBDC at COCC

Of their experience in the SBDC program, Brian says, "We revisited who we are and what we represent in the market and then looked at ways to better position ourselves to be more relevant. We evaluated all aspects of our organization, developed a keener approach to the financial aspects and fine-tuned our marketing plans."

Adds Michelle, "In one year, we achieved a thirty percent growth in sales and profits nearly doubled. We attribute that success in large part to the help we received from Jim and the SBDC. They taught us so much, including placing more emphasis on working ON our business as opposed to simply working IN it. We are working smarter."



*With help from the Small Business Administration and the Oregon Business Development Department, the Small Business Development Center offers advising and workshops to new and existing businesses.*

