

# Businesses nominated for 'success stories'

The Small Business Development Center, based in The Dalles at Columbia Gorge Community College, has nominated Cascade Acupuncture Center, Columbia Gorge Wine Club Inc., and the Imperial River Company resort for their business growth, expansion and excellence.

Cascade Acupuncture's owner, Carola Stepper, first approached the Small Business Development Center in August 2005 to get assistance with a business acquisition. That same month she acquired her Hood River clinic at 104 Fifth St.

After a few consultations to strategically position her business for growth, Stepper expanded her business through another business acquisition in The Dalles. She recently hosted an open house at her second clinic location in the Medical Arts Building at 414 Washington St. The expansion was financed through MCEDD.

"Carola's attention to detail, focused energy on her business goals and her patients has

made her a success," said Mary Merrill, director of the Small Business Development Center. "Carola's staff has grown from one to five through this process. We wanted to honor her commitment to excellence through this nomination."

Columbia Gorge Wine Club's owner, Stacey Shaw, first approached the SBDC for assistance in October 2005. Stacey sought assistance to set up her wine club over the Internet. Wine clubs are new to the region and a way for entrepreneurs to sell local wine products over the Internet to members of the club.

The local Small Business Development Center assisted Stacey in obtaining the business registries for Oregon and Washington to get her started. After some computer mentoring, business plan review, e-commerce counseling and software review Shaw launched her online business at [columbiagorgewineclub.com](http://columbiagorgewineclub.com) in March 2006. Locally Stacey markets her business through [pocards.net](http://pocards.net).

"I love Stacey's new marketing tool, a post-

card featuring a woman wearing a black lace dress, pink cowboy boots while using a crowbar to open a crate of wine. It really gets people's attention!" said Merrill. "Stacey and her marketing team are geniuses."

Imperial River Company resort's owners Rob and Susie Miles first approached the Small Business Development Center in January 2004. The Mileses completed a successful year in the Small Business Management Program in June 2005 through the Small Business Development Center. They successfully secured financing and broke ground for the 13-room expansion in November 2005.

The new lobby, 45-seat conference room, quiet bar, courtyard and new photo shop opened in July 2006.

Merrill said, "We provide a little bit of information, counseling training, and assistance for our clients. They take it and run with determination toward their goals. I applaud the efforts of these determined individuals."