

Have you ever thought back to some of the advice that you were given by your parents and realized that they knew what they were talking about? My parents owned a dairy farm that they worked very hard to pay for. They never made enough money to pay their bills from the farm alone so they also worked full time jobs away from the farm. I could not understand where they got the passion and energy to devote to this endeavor. My parents would always tell me that anything that you dreamed about was worth putting in the effort for. Their dream of owning a farm was worth the long hours that they worked.

As I put in hour after hour in my job as a social worker there were many times when I dreamed about having a small agency that would provide services that were not available to the rural clients that I worked with. I knew that starting something like this would take a great deal of effort as well as money that I did not have to invest. I was talking about my idea one day with one of the county commissioners that sits on our board. He told me that there are many small business grants that are available through the government. You need to apply for them by writing a grant proposal; but there were many grants that people do not know exists, so there is not a great deal of competition for them. He told me that he would give me a list of small business grants that are available so that I could see if any of the ideas I had for a service agency would qualify.

When I saw the list of small business grants that he had I was surprised at the number of them that there were. The grant writing is tedious and time consuming; however I thought back to my parents struggles to own their own business and I knew that it was possible to achieve big dreams if you kept at them. I applied for two different grants that the programming I was considering would qualify for. One grant was for a year and the other was for two years. Both grants were available to reapply for once the program was established. If you could show that the business was serving clients that would not have other local resources that chances of maintaining on-going funding was quite high. After submitting my two proposals I was granted the money from the grant offering a two year funding source. From the grant I could [pay myself a salary as well as hire support staff. The grant did not have to be repaid as long as service were provided to an agreed upon number of people. I am in the first year of the grant and I have already served more people than I would have ever imagined. I do not think there will be an issue of renewing the grant in the future. I am so glad that my parents set the example for me that they did,