



PROBOPAT

## Mi Casa Resource Center - ProBoPat Success Story | Deborah's Story

Deborah Campbell is no stranger to entrepreneurship, beginning her first business venture selling Christmas cards at the age of 14.

Since then, she has owned and operated a variety of businesses including a clothing store and coffee shop.

But one night as she was making sushi with her son, an idea was born that took her in a new entrepreneurial direction.

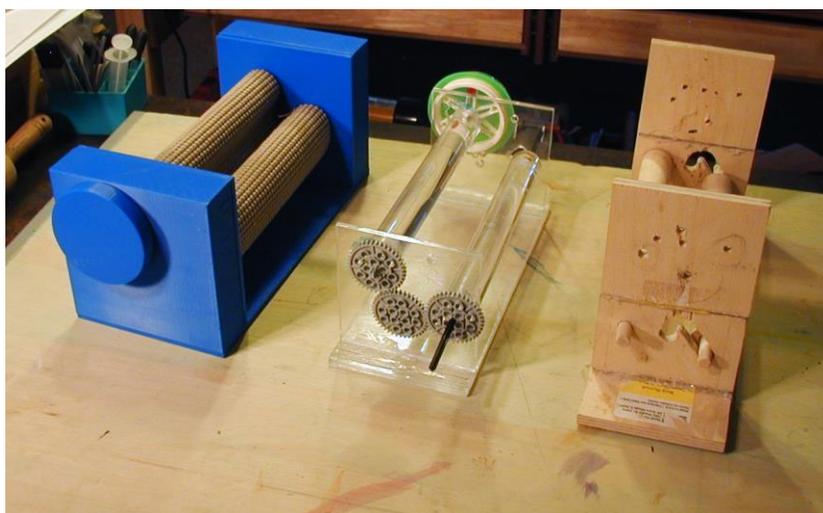
The sushi making was not going smoothly. Rice was sticking everywhere leading to sanitation concerns. It was time-consuming to use the traditional bamboo rolling mat. And the resulting rolls were less than ideal due to their messiness.

"My son said, 'There's got be a better way to do this,'" Deborah remembers.

Deborah and her son began talking about creating a sushi rolling machine, which she began designing in her head. Deborah made a wooden prototype and then one entirely out of Legos® - complete with a Lego® gear - to get placement exact.

Using the measurements of the Lego® prototype, Deborah built an acrylic version with the help of her husband. But it was too large and costly, at a production price of \$500.

Deborah then scaled down and fine-tuned the design to a sleeker and more cost-effective version, going through 20 to 30 prototypes.



Deborah's daughter pitched in to help aesthetically with the logo and color variations, making the project a true family affair.

The finished version is made of acrylic pieces that pop together, removing the need for glue and allowing it to be dishwasher safe.

After the ingredients are placed inside, a crank is all that's needed to churn out a standard-sized sealed sushi roll within seconds - hence the name 2 Minute Sushi.

"We once made 64 pieces of sushi in about 15 minutes with 2 Minute Sushi," Deborah said. "It truly streamlines sushi making to be much cleaner and faster."



Deborah discovered the ProBoPat program at Mi Casa Resource Center through the United States Patent and Trademark Office website after applying for a non-provisional patent. ProBoPat connects low-income inventors with volunteer patent professionals who provide legal services on a pro bono basis.

She was paired with attorneys at Merchant & Gould who helped her navigate the complex journey of obtaining a full patent.

“In many cases, the ProBoPat program is the bridge that makes access to the patent process a possibility for small business owners,” said Jennifer Rothschild, ProBoPat Program Administrator at Mi Casa Resource Center.

The legal process to obtain a full patent typically requires three to five years and thousands of dollars in fees.

“I don’t think I would have obtained a full patent without the help of the ProBoPat program,” Deborah said. “I didn’t have the stamina required to keep up through the back and forth claims process with the patent office.”

“And the claims have to be worded in a particular way, which is what the attorneys I was paired with specialize in.”

Inventors who attempt to navigate the patent process without legal help can unknowingly make decisions that harm the value of their patent application.



“The ProBoPat program pairs qualifying inventors with a volunteer professional who has patent experience and can help them through the complicated process and the many decisions along the way,” said Ben Fernandez, a ProBoPat volunteer attorney.

“It’s a long process with many phases. Even for sophisticated companies, it’s a high risk, high cost endeavor.”

Within two years of contacting the ProBoPat program, Deborah and her family were awarded a full patent in May 2016, thanks in part to an acceleration she was able to apply for due to her husband’s age.

Deborah plans to go into production with 2 Minute Sushi and make purchases available through Amazon this September.

Future goals include obtaining a trademark and licensing the patent for production as well as selling through stores and television programs.

Deborah’s advice to other inventors centers around

perseverance.

“Just keep at it and don’t give up,” Deborah said. “I made it minute by minute doing the best I could.”

“And get help. The ProBoPat lawyers did a wonderful job and were very kind. I wouldn't have made it through the patent process without them.”

ProBoPat serves qualifying inventors in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. Learn more at <http://www.micasaresourcecenter.org/business-development/pro-bono-patent-program/>