

## **SBA Supports Total Orthotic & Prosthetic Solutions**

Miguel A. Guerra had always dreamed of owning his own business. As a child he studied hard and graduated in the top two percent of his class. After high school, he decided to pursue a business degree from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) while working at an ice cream shop. It was in his last year of college that that he met a gentleman and his wife who were “regulars” at the ice cream shop. He learned that they were small business owners of an orthotic and prosthetic business.

Miguel and the couple developed a friendship and one day they invited him to visit their business. Miguel was impressed and intrigued with the business and the couple offered him a job cleaning and helping out. He accepted and began working there after class and on weekdays while working at the ice cream shop on weekends. During his time in college he met his future wife to be, Susan M. Guerra who was studying to be a registered nurse.

Miguel’s interest grew in orthotics and prosthetics and he began training as a technician. After completing his business degree at UTEP, he began taking prerequisite courses in the orthotics and prosthetics and when completed he applied and was accepted at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. In the summer of 1994, he moved to Dallas, Texas with his wife Susan to pursue his new degree.

He graduated in 1996, and the couple returned to El Paso, Texas. Miguel began working at the same orthotics and prosthetic business where he first started with the dream of someday becoming a partner or owning the business. In April 2003, an unexpected event occurred when his boss passed away. After spending some time working at the business, they decided it would be in their best interest to start their own business and turned to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for support.

They received business counseling assistance from the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) a SBA sponsored business partner. They called on Bank of the West of El Paso and obtained an SBA Express loan for equipment and working capital. The SBA Express Loan offers minimal loan application paperwork and a quick turnaround time on a loan guaranty decision. They started the business in 2004 and Susan continued working as a registered nurse until 2007 when they felt it was safe for her to join the business full-time. During this period Susan worked hard handling her job as a nurse and then working in the business during her free time.

The many hours of education and work to grow the business paid off. They started with five employees and have grown to eight employees. Bank of the West nominated the business for the 2008 Minority Enterprise Development Week for the Minority Small Business Persons of the Year. “Miguel and Susan have been exemplary customers of Bank of the West as well as in the community. On a regular basis they have made monetary donations to various charities,” said Elsa Galindo of Bank of the West.