



refuelabbeville.com

SSBCI Business Consultant: David Dougherty



For Stacia Powell, owning a business in her hometown of Abbeville, South Carolina, wasn't just a goal—it was a lifelong dream. "For as long as I can remember, the desire to own my own business drove me," Powell shared. "And as I got older, that desire only grew stronger."

That passion led her to the Old Beaty Gas Station, a vacant but iconic building just one block from the town square. She envisioned transforming it into Refuel of Abbeville, a unique dining destination featuring locally sourced fresh ingredients, classic Southern Cuisine with a twist, and hand dipped artisan ice cream.

However, as an entrepreneur without significant capital reserves, Powell faced major financial hurdles. The historic building required extensive renovations, specialized restaurant equipment, and working capital to get off the ground.

THE BACK STORY

Determined to make her dream a reality, Powell first met with SC SBDC Business Consultant David Dougherty in May 2022. From the very first meeting, Dougherty provided comprehensive guidance, helping Powell develop strategies, refine financial projections, and secure the funding needed to bring her vision to life.

Dougherty's expertise in financial management proved instrumental in helping Powell secure a \$235,000 commercial loan, to launch the business, plus another \$19,900 in financing and grants —enhancements that improved the restaurant's aesthetics and functionality.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES THROUGH SSBCI

When the SC SSBCI program launched in January, 2024, Dougherty quickly recognized that Refuel of Abbeville would be an ideal client due to Powell's need for in-depth guidance in establishing and managing sound fiscal and accounting systems. Dougherty also worked closely with Powell to strengthen her business operations. As a first-time business owner, Powell faced a steep learning curve in all these disciplines.



RESULTS:

\$643,255

2024 ANNUAL SALES

21

JOBs CREATED

\$62,000

SALE OF BUSINESS



"David has been the expert, sounding board and advocate that I needed to keep going and achieve my dreams."

**- Stacia Powell
Owner, ReFuel of Abbeville**

REFUEL OF ABBEVILLE

“I plan to maximize profits by offering quality products, innovative ideas, and unique menu items to keep customers coming back,” Powell said. Dougherty helped her address these goals by teaching her to understand financial statements and manage her cash flow. He conducted financial analyses and shared best practices for managing food and labor costs, which led to a new pricing structure that would sustain her profitability.

After a year in business, Powell faced an unexpected challenge: managing both a restaurant and an ice cream parlor stretched her to the limit. Sales were strong, but operating two businesses at once proved overwhelming. She again turned to Dougherty for guidance.

“After consulting with David, I was able to negotiate a \$62,000 cash sale for my ice cream parlor,” Powell explained. This strategic decision enabled her to focus on the restaurant which was thriving and utilize the proceeds to reinvest in a slow, step-by-step expansion, while paying off debt and dramatically improving her financial position.

A THRIVING BUSINESS AND A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Thanks to Powell’s determination and Dougherty’s unwavering support, Refuel of Abbeville has surpassed expectations. The restaurant generated \$643,255 in annual sales in 2024, far exceeding initial projections.

The financial turnaround also allowed Powell to pay off the mortgage on her building, adding \$1,100 in monthly cash flow and increasing working capital. Even more impactful, Refuel has created quality jobs in a rural town with limited employment opportunities, adding 21 new jobs in 2024 alone and now employing a total of 32 staff.

But Powell’s vision goes beyond numbers. She has built a true community gathering place, where customers feel at home. In fact, she now enjoys regular customers who travel in from outside Abbeville just to eat at Refuel.

“I’m just a regular person living the American dream,” Powell said. “The culture at Refuel is all about family. We even have conversation cards on the tables to encourage guests to leave their phone numbers and connect with each other.”



FUELING THE FUTURE

Through her ongoing partnership with the SC SBDC, Powell has turned an entrepreneur’s dream into a thriving business that does exactly what she hoped—refuels the Abbeville community with more than just delicious food.

With Dougherty by her side, Powell continues to refine her business strategy, increase her revenues and improve her profitability, ensuring Refuel of Abbeville remains a staple in her hometown for years to come.

SERVICES PROVIDED:

- BUSINESS FINANCING STRATEGIES
- FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
- ACCOUNTING GUIDANCE
- GENERAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT