



## For Mother-Daughter Team, Working in a Male-Dominated Industry is a Family Affair

A WOMEN'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SUCCESS STORY:  
ANGELA AND LYNSI PETITTI, GARY'S EAST COAST SERVICE INC.

In the restaurant industry, a broken piece of commercial kitchen equipment can instantly cripple a business and sap revenue.

For nearly 25 years, restaurants, schools, corporate cafeterias, hospitals and food trucks throughout Connecticut and parts of Massachusetts and New York have trusted Gary's East Coast Service Inc. for prompt emergency repair and maintenance services for their commercial kitchen appliance equipment.

At the helm of the Shelton-based establishment is Angela Petitti who co-owns the business with her husband Gary. In 1994, the two launched the business out of their home garage and today employ 17 full-time staff, including their 22-year-old daughter, Lyndsi, a recent college graduate who serves as the company's communication and technology facilitator. Lyndsi and her younger sister Aylana (who is currently pursuing a business degree at UCONN) both aspire to become the next generation to run Gary's East Coast Service.

Despite being a close-knit family, Angela admits that owning a business with relatives does present its own, unique challenges. "Fortunately for us, my husband and I have different job duties," she chuckled.

Her jovial tone shifts as she describes the difficulty of maintaining work separate from family life. "We make a conscious effort not to bring up business when we're all sitting at the dinner table," she said.

"We try to find the sweet spot where business stays at the office and home is where we're just a family. When you own a company, it can really take over your life if you let it. You never have enough time at home ... and you never have enough time at work. You just have to try give to each its due."

Earlier in the year, Petitti attended a networking event where she met Kenyetta Banks, program manager with the Women's Business Development Council. Petitti shared with her the family's plans to purchase a new building to house their business before their current lease

ended. She needed help.

"We needed information on the process and especially how to approach financing. Kenyetta suggested I take a six-week business-planning class to understand the ins and outs of what was in front of us. It sounded like the perfect fit and a great opportunity for Lyndsi to come and share her input, too, as she's very interested in taking over the business someday."

The course was a confidence booster for mother and daughter alike. One of the featured speakers, Janet Siegenthaler – manager of business counseling and access to capital at Women's Business Development Council – struck a chord with the mother-daughter team.

"Janet said that we had a good, solid business," the older Petitti said. "It was great to hear that we were on the right path, and we gained great tips on how to grow even more. She guided us on the steps we needed to secure a real estate loan and gave us the confidence to go to the big banks and show them that we're a solid, growing business."

Lyndsi, who will play an instrumental role in the process of securing their new headquarters from obtaining capital to moving into their new space, said that as a woman in a male-dominated industry, she understands how easy it can be for other women to be tempted to not speak up.

"I've followed in my mom's footsteps and worked my way into the role that I have. But I know she carved that initial path and knowing this is a reminder that it's so important to never lose sight of the fact that what you, as a woman, bring to the table is important, too."

"Every day, I try to prove myself as much as possible. I'm trying to build experience by being as hands-on as I can with everything so I can be a good co-worker, a good daughter and one day, a good boss."

The Women's Business Development Council is a nonprofit providing the training, education and borrowing power necessary for women to launch and grow their businesses. For more information visit [ctwbdc.org](http://ctwbdc.org).