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# MBA students help Aurora small business prepare for expansion



*Katrina Boldry*

Katrina Boldry (left), owner of Aurora's Bold Lead Designs, works with a team of students from MBAs Across America, that is helping her prepare for a major expansion. The team includes (L to R): Saurabh Kumar, Nydia Cardenas (kneeling), Stefanie Thomas and Kory Vargas Caro.



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Many MBA students spend their summers on Wall Street. Others can be found mingling with executives at large companies' headquarters.

But four are in Aurora this week, volunteering their time to help a three-person small business prepare for its biggest product launch ever.

The quartet are part of "MBAs Across America," a first-year program in which teams of students each choose six projects in six locations and travel across the country helping promising local companies take steps toward major expansions.

They have been spending their week with [Katrina Boldry](#), owner of Bold Lead Designs LLC, a company that makes high-end harnesses and leashes for service dogs and other canines.

Boldry opened her company in 2008 because she couldn't find a leash she liked, especially after one that she had used to train a service dog, and used on her own pets, finally gave out after 15 years. She has grown the company — she hired her first two full-time employees in June 2013 — and is preparing to go big with some new or previously limited-production products, including a head collar and leash designed to teach dogs not to pull away from their owners.

This is where [Kory Vargas Caro](#) and his team come in. Vargas Caro is studying for his master's degree in business administration at [University of California-Berkeley](#). His teammates — [Nydia Cardenas](#), [Saurabh Kumar](#) and [Stefanie Thomas](#) — are seeking their MBAs at the [University of Michigan](#).

Throughout this week, they have been working with Boldry to do market research, determine exactly how much of the new products she should make and look at how widespread their distribution should be.

“Typically, you hear about MBAs that go off to Wall Street or major corporations. It doesn't seem fair that some of that education doesn't go to help small businesses, which are the lifeblood of jobs in this country,” Vargas Caro said. “For us, Denver is an exciting place to be.”

The MBAs team got Boldry's name from [Mi Casa Resource Center](#), where she first went in 2008 to take a business training class. They've met with her for hours daily since Monday, working on cost figures for the product launch and to do a competitive landscape study on the local and national markets.

Boldry acknowledged that she has been considering the new product launch for a while but had been somewhat paralyzed by the size of all the tasks she needed to do to make it happen. Having the volunteer team come in has allowed her to push forward on a growth that she hopes will allow her to expand Bold Lead Designs further and to allow her to hire more employees, she said.

“I've been trying to get this particular project going for a year. There are so many technical logistics,” Boldry said. “Having the assistance to get those nuts and bolts really working and moving along is going to help Bold Lead Designs really get to the next level.”

With the research and advice nearly completed, Boldry hopes to finalize details for the product launch in the next six to eight weeks. This is exactly what her helpers want to hear.

“When we talked to Katrina, two things stuck out,” Vargas Caro said. “One was her passion for customer service, and the other was the urgency she had to launch.”

Meanwhile, the team of students will pack up Friday and head to Detroit for their next volunteering session.

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