



Bronx-Based Garment Company Receives Grant For Customized Training From City

BY ERIN CLARKE



The city's Small Business Services agency is providing thousands of dollars in help to make sure the Bronx-based KD Dance and other companies can continue to succeed. NY1's Erin Clarke filed the following report.

Thirty years ago, former dancer David Lee began hand-sewing leg warmers and tights. Now, his business, KD Dance, is an international retailer with its factory in the South Bronx.

"Everything is manufactured here at our factory here in the Bronx, and we also have moved into fashion, so we do some fashion," Lee said. "And most of our fashion wear are inspired by our dance and the yogawear, which makes it unique."

KD Dance now has 22 employees who hand-knit many garments, and during the peak season, the company ships up to 2,000 pieces a day, selling online and through a retail store in NoHo.

Expansion continues as Lee is always creating.

"The dress material, it's actually, we call it vegetable cashmere," Lee said. "It's a yarn that I've worked with a company in China to develop for a couple of years. It's actually a blend of cotton and soy."

Lee also has a patent pending on a new fabric for yoga mats that's already attracted attention from furniture and footwear makers.

To keep up with the increase in business Lee anticipates, he invested in new equipment. His employees need to learn how to use it, so he turned to Small Business Services.

The city agency awarded KD Dance approximately \$44,000 for customized training.

In the case of KD Dance, staff will learn how to use a newly acquired machine and the software that works it.

The customized training grant program can

provide up to \$400,000, eliminating the financial constraints that often keeps businesses from growing.

"It's for those companies that are going to make an investment in a skill set for their employees or to improve the operations that improve efficiency," said New York City Small Business Services Commissioner Robert Walsh.

After training, Lee expects output to increase by about 20 percent. His staff will also get raises. SBS said that will prevent employee turnover and go a long way towards the grant program's goal of producing a better trained workforce and more competitive companies here in New York.

For more information about the program, visit the Small Business Services website, nyc.gov/sbs