



A strong work ethic

It helped Kathy Cichocki learn the cleaning business inside and out

By Hollie Davies

Eighteen years ago, when Kathy Cichocki became the owner of Irene's European Cleaning Service, it was a financial decision not to change the name of the business to her own. Marketing had been prepared for the former owner and Kathy chose not to spend money on new promotions.

As it turned out, it was a great decision for a young, hardworking woman with a dream to succeed. Kathy put her money into equipment, supplies and quality service, and hasn't looked back.

"I grew up with a strong work ethic, so I wasn't afraid of long hours," she explained. "I worked for five years alone, learning the business inside out, and then I began hiring employees." Kathy trains her employees to her own high standards and now has four couples who work as teams.

"The key to success in a small business is to keep your good clients and build more through referrals. If you have constant employee turnover and your clients see new faces all the time, you can't build good relationships. Keeping existing customers satisfied also cuts down on advertising costs."

Kathy's client list now includes residential and commercial accounts, and her business is licensed, bonded, owner-supervised, and has an "A" rating with the Better Business Bureau.

Kathy grew up in Poland and has a bachelor's degree in marketing, so it was not an easy decision to go into the cleaning business. But, in her 20s and with a child to raise, she needed the flexibility of making her own hours and working for herself. When she moved the business from Orange County to Corona 11 years ago, she says the Corona Chamber of Commerce was an enormous help.

"I attend breakfasts and other events, and have made many friends and business connections." Her most eventful connection was meeting Norbert, now her husband, who is the Chamber's membership director.

Although they both work hard, Kathy and Norbert make time for skiing, camping, hiking, and roller-blading. "It's very important for women in business to maintain their health, especially when



Kathy Cichocki, owner of Irene's European Cleaning Service, with the tools of her trade.

they have children," she said. "You have to eat well, exercise, and stay strong, mentally and physically, because there are long hours and many schedules to juggle and decisions

to make."

Kathy can be reached at (714) 632-7605 or (951) 898-7575. Or visit her website, www.cleanforyou.net.