

# WOMEN *in* BUSINESS



■ *Breaking stereotypes, these Lane County women are among many who have found success. Read their stories inside, plus find ideas to inspire your own success story.*

cent more than what I should have paid for it."

Carrero's extensive financial background and Slagle's restaurant savvy were about the only things that saved their business during those first years.

With the passage of the property tax limitation bill, Measure 5, higher tuitions resulted in fewer students who had less discretionary income, Carrero says. During summers business dropped off 55 percent.

Meanwhile Tom Slagle was inventing high-end, gourmet pizzas, insisting that every ingredient be as fresh and made-from-scratch as possible.

"I could see what was happening," adds Carrero, "and I knew we couldn't continue to sell a high-end product to a low-end market. In addition, food costs were going up."

Carrero and her sons decided they wouldn't go down without a fight. So while mom sharpened her accountant's pencil to find creative ways of keeping the business afloat, her son was busy in the kitchen, creating a pizza no one had ever heard of.

"When he first told me about his idea for a barbecued chicken pizza, I admit I wasn't very enthusiastic," says Carrero. "But I didn't want to curb his creativity. Within a few months it was our number-one selling pizza!"

Adding a lunchtime buffet to attract business people, sponsoring local sports teams and taking their pizzas "on the road" to community events like

the Eugene Celebration, county fair, the Willamette Pass during snow season and the Emeralds' baseball games have helped widen the customer base.

"It's been a lot of extra work, but it's paid off. The best adver-

location in Springfield at the corner of 41st and Main.

Nearly half of Track Town's more than 100 employees are students. Because Carrero can offer them part-time work around their school schedules,



Photo by Bryan Wesel/Register-Guard Creative Services

**Track Town Pizza owner Mary Carrero goes over plans for her next location, to open in a Springfield Texaco Star Mart in July.**

tising we can do is have people eat our product," says Carrero.

In 1992 Track Town Pizza opened a pick-up-and-delivery location on West 11th that is managed by Carrero's other son, Ken. Last year, a dining room was added to the restaurant.

In early April its newest location opened, a pick-up-and-delivery store on River Road in the Santa Clara area. In July Track Town will become the first local independent restaurant inside a Texaco Star Mart when it opens its fourth

there is very little turnover. Many employees stay for several years and some move into management positions.

Carrero personally trains those employees who show an interest and aptitude for the office side of the restaurant business and has even paid for classes for some.

With business expansions and revenues more than tripling during the past four years, Track Town Pizza's success might appear meteoric. By next year, Carrero expects to have all four locations paid for.

But real life rarely follows Cinderella stories, and Carrero isn't likely to forget those first two difficult years when things could have gone either way. Under constant financial stress, her family experienced tragedy with the death of one of her sons.

"We've been through a lot together and we've made a lot of sacrifices," she says. "But Tom, Ken and I have really bonded with this business. And we've received a lot of help."

"The city, our landlord, the bank and our suppliers have worked with us. They took a risk but said, 'We just believe you're going to make it.'"