**Dan Gorton**
Regional Director

**Kalispell Regional SBDC**

# Trovare

Whitefish, MT



"Dan challenged my thinking, urged me to explore more profitable options, probed my level of confidence in assumptions, and independently analyzed data. He offered suggestions, unbiased criticism, and essentially helped me develop a solid plan. It's people like Dan who help people like me turn a dream into a reality."
**Julie Hickethier, *Owner***

After working 36 years in healthcare, Julie Hickethier decided to start her second career with her passion for cooking and entertaining. Julie had spent years as the busy mom looking to put dinner on the table with high-quality ingredients. Through her experience, she learned that finding quality ingredients and high-end kitchen supplies conveniently was difficult. After doing research and discovering that the Flathead Valley had her desired target market of "foodies," Julie was determined to open a high-quality cooking supply and ingredient store.

Initially starting with the Blackstone Launchpad at the University of Montana and Jennifer Stephens, the Missoula SBDC Regional Director, Julie turned to the Kalispell SBDC when she decided on Whitefish as her new home base. Dan Gorton, Kalispell SBDC Regional Director, worked with Julie to determine her financial risk, the pros and cons of a seasonal, small resort community location, and marketing considerations. Dan also guided Julie through the development of a business plan, the compilation of a loan package, making connections for staffing, and determining operational necessities for her business. Additionally, Dan made connections for Julie with the Culinary Institute of Montana at his host organization, Flathead Valley Community College.

Julie received a $175,000 loan to cover startup inventory and other soft costs. Julie's daughter, Mallory, a recent University of Montana marketing graduate, joined her mother in Whitefish to help run the business while Julie handled the inventory and customer sales. In November of 2019, Julie and Mallory opened Trovare in downtown Whitefish. Trovare, Italian for "to stumble upon," carries thousands of kitchen supply products from salts, cheeses, and spices to pots, pans, and cutting boards. The main course of Trovare is products by Olivelle, a specialty food retail store in Bozeman. While oils and vinegars are Trovare's specialty, Julie provides cheese and charcuterie catering at the store. Additionally, with the help of two additional instructional chefs that she hired, Julie hosts cooking classes at the store. Julie has used the allure of so many unique cooking ingredients to grow her business, which she augments as a "tasting store," allowing customers to ensure they are choosing the perfect ingredients.