

Margueritte Ramos grew up in Hialeah. As the daughter of Cuban parents who immigrated from CienFuegos prior to the Castro Revolution, she is no stranger to hard work and dedication. After graduating from George Washington University with a degree in Political Science, she devoted herself to working on political campaigns for 20 years. She built an impressive résumé working as a campaign manager for two different candidates, including the Bush/Quayle campaign for Miami-Dade County.

In 2005, Margueritte started a business when she realized that while protection from the sun is vital for Florida's residents and tourists, there was a gap in the market for products that were also visually appealing. At first she focused on design-forward tension sails and playground canopies, and eventually expanded to retractable sails, cabanas and canopies. Margueritte exemplifies how a positive attitude, hard work and the desire to learn can get you very far in business. Although her background and studies were not in construction or business, she learned about the industry and owning a company through trial and error and with a lot of dedication.

Despite the company's success, at one point

ShadeFLA experienced a plateau in sales. While attending the Goldman Sachs 10,000 small businesses course, Margueritte learned about **HBIF** and decided to schedule a consulting session. HBIF was able to provide her with **marketing plan and corporate branding grants** to help ShadeFLA identify and penetrate its target markets, such as the hospitality and the healthcare industries. **The plans were so helpful that by May 2016, ShadeFLA had matched its 2015 annual sales.**

Currently, ShadeFLA's products are not only found in hotels and parks all over Florida, but also in Chicago, Birmingham, Aspen and the Hamptons. Internationally, ShadeFLA has a presence in parts of the Caribbean, such as the Bahamas, Aruba and the Virgin Islands, and they are working to expand their reach further into the Caribbean and Central America.

The company currently has six full-time employees, as well as independent contractors. With the help of her tenacious and dedicated team, Margueritte aspires to build on their success at providing stylish and effective sun protection and become a \$10 million company within the next five years.

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