

Chairman Velazquez,

Ranking member Graves,

Congresswomen Bean

and distinguished committee members; thank you for inviting me to share my business journey with you.

I am honored and humbled to be here today.

I grew up in a small town and like many, I LOVE the movies -- at times, my life seems like a movie.

In fact, I feel a strong kinship with Forrest Gump-in that you never know what you are capable of until you try.

When I was a child I was always trying something. I interviewed the new tenants of the first 3 story office building in our neighborhood and sold a mini newspaper to the neighbors.

At fourteen I created a neighborhood carnival. It was a fun filled day of wheel barrow rides, downhill barrel rolls, bucket tosses and more. All of the kids from my neighborhood stood in line to take their turn and win a prize.

My dad watched me work as hard as I could to pull this off.

At the end of the day, and after I invested all of my babysitting money, he asked how much money I had made.

I was embarrassed to tell him, I said, ... "Uh, nothing".... but enthusiastically told him how much fun it was, the kids loved the rides, balloons, games and prizes for all - and that it didn't really matter - everyone had fun.

He paused, looked at me as he slowly pulled a crisp \$20 bill out of his wallet, and with his huge smile and a twinkle in his eye said, "Cindy there are times in life when business isn't only about profits or yourself"

I saw that day the importance of fun in creating memories. I used that \$20 to contribute to my next venture.

I believe that is the first day I understood how business could build a community.

My Real Estate Career began after my children arrived - Like many small communities McHenry's downtown had been impacted by the new "big box" stores and their ability to offer a bigger selection at lower prices; store fronts were struggling and beginning to look run down, many had closed.

I saw an opportunity. My mother, sisters and I became "purveyors of resale home furnishings", opening our first retail venture. This allowed me to purchase and renovate the building which sits proudly on the corner of Main St. and Route 31 in downtown McHenry. Customers flocked, I received a facade grant towards the improvements and the building was featured on the city sticker for the year. This is when I understood how a community could help build a business.

After a few years, my entrepreneurial spirit got the best of me once again when one day I saw a sign 'for sale or lease' on the closed downtown movie theatre.

I drove the building owner crazy. I called, left messages-and finally convinced him to let us host an Oscar Party at the theatre. More importantly it would be an opportunity to possibly reopen the theatre which could act as a lynch pin to help bring families into the downtown.

Families' downtown meant money spent in our downtown. McHenry was ready . . . We were willing. Both the city and the community have supported us throughout our journey, and the man I drove crazy - has since become a special mentor.

With the help of the SBA 504 loan we were able to purchase the McHenry downtown theater, and later the Antioch theater.

Today "C" You At The Movies, Inc. operates 4 indoor locations and one of the 12 remaining drive-ins in Illinois. We may not have the newest equipment or the latest innovations; 3-D at this time is a dream – *which incidentally is the reason for our industries record breaking year.*

But our customers are loyal- we have watched children grow up... Families come back because we offer a fun, safe, family friendly and affordable movie going experience which is close to home. Affordable fun that builds memories.

We offer the "C" Team –Employees committed to exceptional customer service. Our Company is a growing family of over 50 employees from within our communities. These are the hardest working – most loyal young men and women, which I am proud to say, are a part of my team. They are learning skills- public speaking, cash handling, conflict resolution and customer service- that will serve them throughout their lives.

In recent years, I have faced a family health crisis, the economic turn and the steep learning curve of the movie industry.

Maneuvering thru the challenges of operating a small business in today's unique and ever changing environment is difficult.

Banks are not lending.

Cash flow is growing tighter by the day, and the fear of the unknown is of great concern.

Last year, I realized I needed some help. Never one to shy away from learning what I don't know I went to the McHenry County College's Small Business Development Center.

I met with the Director Mary Margaret Maule. *3M as she is fondly referred*, very politely but directly told me I needed to improve my skills and put processes in place in order to keep up with a growing company. We learned to improve our cash flow by reducing the waste within our company and to make decisions using metrics that mattered.

My work with the ISBDC has helped me to established better business practices, processes to increase the efficiency and communication tools to work with my employees, suppliers and banks. We have and will continue to attend several classes, workshops, meet one on one with experts and mentors to grow our business, improve our technology and work in a more stable environment.

Today- I am looking towards the next great cinematic event for our company. We are once again entering into a growth phase and in the coming year hope to acquire another small downtown theater. We are working with two communities on projects to expand our properties in part of a larger downtown revitalization.

We work daily to continue to meet the growing needs of our customers.

Being a small business owner can often be a lonely role- but I have found my success has been due to the help of many; my husband Danny, my Family, - my Friend and General Operations Director Scott Dehn, the SBA, the economic development teams of the communities I operate in and the resources of the SBDC.

My company is built on the premise that if you make things fun.... Affordable and from the heart... customers will come. If you run your company efficiently and seek resources to strengthen the areas you may not excel in... your business will thrive.

Back to my favorite movie Life IS like a box of chocolates –

But I say pick the popcorn and I'll "C" you at the movies.