

# Snowballs in the Fillmore? Coming Soon

Training program will empower cooks, artists

BY AUDREY MOLINA

**M**YANKA LEWIS-MIMS is no stranger to starting from scratch. She and her family moved to the Fillmore from New Orleans in 2005, just after Hurricane Katrina.

Lewis-Mims was actually born in San Francisco, but grew up in New Orleans. While many friends and family members returned to New Orleans after the disaster, she, her husband and their four children decided to settle here.

“I love the diversity in San Francisco,” she says. “I never would have met the different people I’ve met here in New Orleans.”

A business training program launching this month in the neighborhood aims to make it easier for entrepreneurs such as Lewis-Mims to start new ventures. Initiated as part of the Fillmore Economic Development Action Plan and funded by the city and Wells Fargo Bank, the Fillmore Mobile Food and Artisan Marketplace programs target cooks, caterers, artists, musicians and craftspeople and aims to teach them the business skills they need to start businesses in the Fillmore Jazz District.



JOE MANIIO

*“I’m ready to get out there.”*

— MYANKA LEWIS-MIMS, owner of L&M New Orleans Style Snowballs

Urban Solutions, a nonprofit community and economic development organization with an office at 1290 Fillmore, will be leading business development training sessions with La Cocina, another nonprofit specializing in culinary entrepreneurship for low-income communities. Twelve sessions held from June to September will provide free consulting in business planning, financial management, marketing and the business permitting process.

“Our goal is to help neighborhood resi-

dents become entrepreneurs so they can be economically self-sufficient,” says Jenny McNulty, executive director of Urban Solutions. “When they can earn enough income to support themselves and their families, they will be in good positions to create jobs for others.”

A former nurse’s assistant, Lewis-Mims ran her own snowball stand in New Orleans selling scoops of flavored shaved ice for extra income. When she saw that no one was making snowballs in San Francisco,

she decided to re-create her business here. She initially considered a storefront, but opted instead for the mobility of a trailer.

After qualifying for a grant through the Fillmore Community Benefits Fund in 2009, Lewis-Mims was able to cover the startup costs and get a trailer for her business, which she calls L&M New Orleans Style Snowballs. Bought new from Mississippi, it’s equipped with an ice shaver and 40 different flavors of syrup. She also got her own ice machine, which makes 12 pound blocks of ice.

“A snowcone is like beer,” she says. “A snowball is like champagne.”

She says that clear ice, when shaved, provides the fluffy consistency for the snowball to mix with the syrup flavors. And while snowcones are made from pre-crushed ice, she says, snowballs are made from ice freshly shaved to order.

Lewis-Mims likens the snowball to Hawaiian shave ice. When she learned of the Mexican version, called the raspado, she expanded her menu to include classic Mexican flavors such as guava and mango. But her favorite flavor is wedding cake, which includes sweetened condensed milk.

So far Lewis-Mims has not yet operated out of her trailer, relying instead on catering parties. But she hopes the new Fillmore Mobile Food program will be what needs to navigate the city’s revised permitting process so that she can introduce San Francisco to New Orleans style snowballs.

“I’m ready to get out there,” she says.

*For more information about the Fillmore Mobile Food and Fillmore Artisan Marketplace programs, visit [urbansolutionsf.org](http://urbansolutionsf.org) or call 553-4433, extension 101.*