



HCEDC

Hudson County
Economic Development
Corporation

Small Business Spotlight
April 2023
Level Up Studio, LLC.



*Helen Perez & Patrick Mingo, Owners
Level Up Studio, LLC. Bayonne, NJ*

Helen Perez's aspirational journey to become a small business owner in Hudson County reflects her resilience, strength, and desire to give back to the people of her community in transformative ways. In 2017, Helen and her partner Patrick Mingo opened Level Up Studio, a training facility in Bayonne that motivates people to improve their health in a judgment-free space to reach their fitness goals confidently. "After years of commuting and living in cities like New York City and Boston, we chose Bayonne. It was just the right size for us to pursue our entrepreneurial goals in a welcoming environment. Hudson County offered a fast-paced city lifestyle without compromising location, access to parks, and outdoor activities."

Helen discovered her passion for fitness after experiencing physical and mental improvement. She reflected, "Exercising impacted me in more ways than I have ever expected. I was not only working out for myself but pushing others to reach personal milestones in fitness they thought they could never achieve with one-on-one training." She wanted to empower other women to gain experience and confidence through exercise. In her spare time, she began training women in the park, then a garage, and ultimately rented studio space with her partner Patrick.



Photo credit: [Adena Stevens Photography](#)

With a clear vision for their business, they began to form a plan to reach their desired goals, but then the pandemic changed everything. Helen and Patrick immediately recognized their need for support and, after researching their options, applied to numerous small business assistance programs. Helen connected with Alejandro Cruz, Training & Mentoring Officer, Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC), where they received counseling on loan options and valuable insight into a stronger approach to their business model.

Patrick shared, "When we started Level Up Studio, we were making strides but without structure. The pandemic was the real starting point for understanding our business and allowed us to restructure the business model."

Alejandro encouraged Helen and Patrick to join UCEDC's Virtual Incubator Program (VIP) as a catalyst to grow their business in the direction they envisioned. "UCEDC's VIP allows businesses with ownership from underserved populations the opportunity to sustain themselves through the current economic landscape by offering education and access to capital. It was developed to battle the injustices and obstacles that diverse business owners have historically faced, which have often impeded their success," stated Adam Farrah, President of UCEDC.

"Living in Hudson County, I am in the unique situation to be both a client and observer of the dramatic changes in businesses like Level Up! I'm proud of the partnerships we've developed with organizations like UCEDC and the programs they provide that empower and transform the entrepreneurial community," shared Michelle Richardson, Executive Director of HCEDC.

Helen and Patrick continue to grow Level Up Studio with an improved business plan and skill set while helping individuals of any age reach their fitness goals. Together, they're helping to improve the health of the community one client at a time.



Photo credit: [Adena Stevens Photography](#)

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