



**Francisco and Margarita Castellanos, The Salon Professional Academy, Nampa, ID**

In early 2020, two years after purchasing The Salon Professional Academy in Idaho's Treasure Valley, Margarita was starting to feel like all her hustle was paying off. She had just completed a remodel of the beauty academy, enrollment was up, the future looked bright.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded before her eyes in early spring, Margarita slowly felt her sense of confidence slip away. She closed the student salon and wondered how she could continue to pay wages without getting the business into trouble. "You hate to be in a position where you're asking yourself, do I pay my rent, or do I pay my employees?" Her staff included single mothers and a woman expecting a child later in the year, and she knew unemployment wouldn't provide enough help for them to live on. With a heavy heart, she made the painful decision to furlough five employees and move forward into the unknown with a skeleton staff.

Closing her brick-and-mortar school ushered in a new set of challenges. Cosmetology is a hands-on profession, which made online learning solutions tricky. Student attendance dropped quickly. Even though Margarita was eventually able to make some of the curriculum available online, in the end, several students were not able to attend due to COVID-19-related challenges.

Margarita had worked with MoFi when she needed a loan to purchase the business three years ago. She reached out in March of 2020 to see if there was anything MoFi could do to help. When she heard she qualified for a Paycheck Protection Program loan, Margarita immediately called to re-hire her staff. She told them, "I've got you. It's going to be ok." She says this alone has provided her with an enormous sense of relief.

Now, Margarita has four employees running the online program, and the others are tackling projects like testing new online learning platforms and updating curriculum. "With the help of a PPP loan, I've been able to take this time to do some things I've been wanting to do, but haven't had the time for. Now, I know that whenever we re-open our doors, the educational experience we offer our students will be better than ever." To ensure she can continue to take care of her business and employees, Margarita applied for and received a second PPP loan from MoFi in early 2021.