

# WORK & wealth



## SELLING PROTECTION

**T**erza West once had a vision of running major metropolitan hospitals throughout southern California. But her firsthand experience of dealing with the daily traumas and the red tape at busy University of Southern California Medical Center made her rethink her career goals. Though insurance wasn't on her radar, when a friend mentioned State Farm, West applied for a job as an auto-claims representative—and never left the company. Ten years later she is owner and president of Terza West Insurance Agency, Inc., for State Farm Insurance, where she and her staff of five serve more than 1,900 households. The profitable agency, with annual commissions comfortably in the six figures, has earned numerous industry awards and continues to build its place as a valuable member of the State Farm family.

**GAINING KNOWLEDGE:** "After graduating from the University of Southern California with a degree in public administration, I spent seven years working in various positions at State Farm before completing its 18-month training program that led to my owning an agency. With \$15,000 in personal savings, I

Terza West Insurance Agency, Inc.

spent the first year cold-calling home owners, canvassing neighborhoods, mailing quotes, and meeting with realtors and escrow companies for client referrals. Eighty percent of our policyholders were family, friends and referrals."

**BRANCHING OUT:** "Two years ago the landlords decided not to renew our lease because they planned to expand. I bought a commercial building located across from Paramount Studios in Hollywood. But it needed major work. At one point I oversaw the renovation while also running the business. The new space is three times as large, so to offset costs, I rent space to retail tenants. Today we offer more than 92 products, ranging from business retirement plans and banking products to life insurance and annuities, mutual funds, and health, auto and fire insurance. Business is up about 25 percent annually."

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** "Everyone needs insurance. I'm proud to represent State Farm because it helped me become an entrepreneur. The best part of the job is helping people protect loved ones and assets. At my agency, it's the quality of business and relationships we've built that matters most." —SHERRI A. MCGEE ▸

how i did it