



# SRJC Alumni & Friends

Pat Gage grew up hearing her father say, “Girls don’t go to college.”

Although she attended Santa Rosa Junior College after graduating from Montgomery High School, Pat had no direction or support in college and did not even understand how to select her college classes. She dropped out after one semester to earn a living and help her family. Completing a college education was a dream, not a reality.

Her hunger for education was unabated though, and after marrying and having a son, Pat continued to pursue her education through SRJC’s evening classes. SRJC’s English and art classes stand out particularly in Pat’s mind, as well as her ability to afford her education. “Now more than ever, people can’t afford to go to a four year university, but they can get everything they need at SRJC and use it as a springboard for life.”



Pat’s springboard led her to transfer to Sonoma State University and eventually to her masters at Chico State University in English and creative writing. But it was during her time at Sonoma State University that Pat’s life trajectory changed.

During a weekend workshop focused on life coaching, Pat and a friend, Elizabeth Bertani, decided to start a seasonings business focused on healthier, no-salt added blends. Although they had no previous business experience, Pat and Elizabeth used their student loan funds as seed money to rent a warehouse and begin production. “I didn’t even know what a packing slip was when we started our company, Parsley Patch.”

As they developed the seasonings, they hired a well-known designer, Chris Blum, to create a logo and atypical package design for Parsley Patch. The beautiful artwork, combined with their all natural, low sodium ingredients were a hit at trade shows and garnered attention from multiple distributors and retailers in the early 1980’s as one of the first salt-free seasoning blends.

Parsley Patch developed a loyal following of consumers from word-of-mouth due to their high-quality, healthful blends. After numerous buy-out offers from big-brand companies like McCormick and Lawry’s, Pat accepted McCormick’s offer and sold Parsley Patch in 1987. A key ingredient of the offer was Pat’s requirement for McCormick to continue funding the Parsley Patch Charitable Foundation from a portion of Parsley Patch sales. At that time, corporate philanthropy had yet to become a sound business concept and Pat held her ground until

McCormick agreed. "I've been blessed with success and I feel it's an obligation to give back in some way."

After selling Parsley Patch, Pat's entrepreneurial spirit carried her into new projects. She purchased an athletic club, opened a spa, created a soy beverage for women in menopause and more. Pat was hooked on creating and starting businesses, even though some of her attempts failed. "If you don't get up after the failures, shame on you."

In January 2012, she found her way back to Parsley Patch. After purchasing the signature Parsley Patch blend, Garlicsaltless from Amazon.com, the blend arrived in a Lawry's bottle. It was the wake-up call Pat and her husband, Jon, needed to rebuild their company with their son, Jason Sherwood. "My husband has been my partner in every business we created. As with everything in life, none of us do things in isolation. It takes a team."

Engage Organics takes the Parsley Patch focus on healthy, low salt seasoning blends to the next level with a new name and organic orientation. It also has a renewed focus on family, as Pat's son and grandson are intimately involved with developing, promoting and marketing the new company. "In fact, my nine year old grandson has decided he wants to be CEO of Engage Organics one day."

Pat's legacy of providing low/no salt seasonings for healthy eating habits is timely with many people seeking healthier ways of living. Even more important to her though is the legacy she leaves with her family to follow your life's purpose with determination and perseverance.

Taste the blends yourself at [www.engageorganics.com](http://www.engageorganics.com).