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Getting gleeful about Glee Gum

Entrepreneurial spirit takes Deborah Schimberg to Guatemala and back

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PROVIDENCE — Deborah Schimberg has an entrepreneurial streak with an emphasis on *tikkun olam*, healing the world: From helping establish Southside Community Land Trust 30 years

making positive changes.

Schimberg is no stranger to change. Within days of receiving a grant from the Kellogg National Leadership Development Program, she packed up her family — husband and three children, including a two-month-old infant — to live temporarily in Guatemala. The three-year fellowship allowed her to do what

ered *chicle*, Spanish for “gum,” and became intrigued. “I hadn’t thought about where gum comes from.”

In those days, said Schimberg, Ben & Jerry created Rainforest Crunch ice cream, which helped people in Brazil earn a living by harvesting the Brazil nuts for the ice cream, and Body Shoppe, a cosmetics and skin care company advocated “fair trade,” not aid.

Schimberg, who remained in Rhode Island after graduating from Brown University, was intrigued by models that “used the economic power of industrialized consumer market to help support communities that are often ecologically fragile.”

Her “light bulb” moment came in Guatemala: Wouldn’t it be great to make (an environmentally) green gum? Harvesting the *chicle* doesn’t hurt the tree, she learned, and the *chicle* can be tapped about every five years.

After the family came back from Guatemala — with a block of *chicle* — Schimberg and her kids tried to figure out what to do with it, all before the Internet was the “go-to” resource. Realizing that she couldn’t compete with big gum companies on volume, distribution or price, she found a niche in the novelty market with kits. Those kits, including a make your own chewing gum kit, were designed to connect children, said Schim-



DEBORAH SCHIMBERG



ago in South Providence to more recently helping found the International Charter School in Pawtucket, she’s committed to

she had never done before — take a business idea from creation to implementation.

In Guatemala, she discov-

ENTREPRENEUR PROFILE