

## Environmental Consulting Services, Inc. (ECS)



**Lina Jazi**

In 1989, while the civil war in Lebanon was escalating, Lina Jazi moved to the United States, the land of opportunity and continued her education at the University of Texas in the Medical Center in Houston, Texas. With an undergraduate degree in environmental health from American University of Beirut, Jazi decided against medical school to pursue environmental studies. In 1994, she received her master's degree in Environmental Science.

After working a few short months, she was forced to consider other employment options when the company she worked for closed its doors. Instead of looking for another job she and friend, Sam Barbar decided to start their own business. With an investment of \$1500.00 and a computer each, they formed Environmental Consulting Services, Inc (ECS), a provider of environmental services including site assessments, remediation, asbestos, lead, mold, and indoor air quality.



**Sam Barbar**

The beginning was tough recalls Jazi. “There were a lot of cold calls and rejections. Often times we thought about quitting but Sam and I encouraged each other and we persevered and focused on the future,” said Jazi. Jazi grew up in a family of business owners and entrepreneurship was encouraged. She always knew, as early as her childhood years that she wanted to be an entrepreneur. She originally wanted to be a doctor but heeded the advice of her cousin to look into the environmental field. After taking some classes in environmental studies, she had the insight that this field was going to be imperative to the future.

ECS had their first break with a \$135.00 job. Although it was a small job, it opened the door to many larger contracts. Their first break was soon followed by a contract with the City of Houston. By the late 90's their business was strictly by referrals. Their quality work and competitive pricing has earned them much repeat business and new opportunities. With an increase in business, ECS needed to expand. At a networking event, Jazi met Najla Tanous, District Counsel of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Houston District, , who referred her to the local SBA office. Jazi visited the SBA Houston District Office as well as SBA's resource partners, the Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the University of Houston Small Business Development Center (SBDC). With a general knowledge of the SBA, counseling from SCORE and technical assistance from the SBDC, Jazi contacted a lender to apply for an SBA guaranty loan. In 1997, ECS was approved for an SBA 7(a) program loan from Omni

Bank to expand the business. A year later, ECS secured another SBA guaranteed loan to hire more employees and buy additional equipment.

Today ECS is one of the leading and diverse providers of professional services in environmental, geotechnical engineering and construction. They expanded from environmental services to include construction management, project management, geographic information system (GIS), and civil and structural engineering. Their niche, a one stop shop, quality work and competitive pricing sets them apart from competitors. Jazi wants to continue to grow ECS with plans to open a second office in New York City. ECS is certified as a Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (W/DBE) with the City of Houston, a Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) with the State of Texas, a Small Business Enterprise (SBE) with the port of Houston and the Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro), and as a Minority and Women Business Enterprise with the Houston Independent School District. ECS is also an active member of the Greater Houston Partnership and the U.S. Green Building Council. For three years, ECS was the recipient of the Houston 100 Award, as one of the fast growing companies in Houston. ECS is located at 5718 Westheimer, Ste. 1575, Houston, Texas. For more information, please visit [www.ecsus.com](http://www.ecsus.com).

For information about SBA programs, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). For information about SCORE and the SBDC, visit [www.SCORE.org](http://www.SCORE.org) and [www.sbdc.uh.edu](http://www.sbdc.uh.edu), respectively.