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Sunday, May 25, 2003

Latest Headline News

Updated Every 30 Minutes

Young philanthropist rolling in cookie dough

14-year-old baker enlists friends to raise funds for Big Brothers & Big Sisters

By Jim Knippenberg
 The Cincinnati Enquirer

She's not your usual philanthropist, this 14-year-old Wyoming eighth-grader with no job and no bulging bank account.

Yet Sarah MacKenzie qualifies. As founder, CEO, sales director, business manager, marketing and head chef of eight-week-old Sweet Sarah's, she's making money and giving it away.



Sarah MacKenzie 14, of Wyoming bakes cookies on Sundays to sell during the week. All the proceeds go to charity. (Michael E. Keating photo) | [ZOOM](#) |

Here's the deal: Sarah and two friends spend their Sunday afternoons baking cookies, usually about 12 dozen in five hours, then bagging them and affixing labels. Come Monday, dad Steve delivers them to a handful of local businesses to put in break rooms and coffee bars where they're sold on the honor system.

He picks up the money the following week and, when she has a handful, Sarah gives it away, mostly to Big Brothers & Big Sisters. As of last week, she had donated slightly more than \$250 to BB/BS and a few other charities.

So you gotta ask: What gives here? School all day, swim team practice every afternoon, homework every night, the usual round of teenage socializing, and *still* time to give up her Sundays?

You bet.

"I got the idea awhile ago. I've always liked to bake, and on Sundays my friends Emilie (Neuss) and Elizabeth (Malkin) would come over for bake days because we really loved doing it. It was more like a party we had so much fun. But then we'd have so much food.

"So I looked for something good to do with it. Wyoming's a nice community, but I know

TO GET COOKIES

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a lot of kids aren't as lucky as us. I just wanted to do something nice for others.

For more information on Sweet Sarah's and to find out how to sign up for a cookie run - *if* the bakers have the time - visit www.sweetsarahs.com or call (513) 936-6799.

"I found Big Brothers & Big Sisters and learned about their mission. I decided that someday I want to be a Big Sister, but for right now, I can just give them what we make on cookies."

Got down to business

So she enlisted the family's help and pitched the idea to local businesses. Twenty of them, including Process Plus, Wyoming Meat Market, Primax, AJ Shapers Salon, agreed to take the cookies. Then she got on the phone with other businesses and asked them to donate materials. Several, including Fairfield's BakeMark, agreed.

Parents Steve and Nancy agreed to pay for the ingredients *and* check out what sort of regulations they'd have to worry about. Steve found out from Hamilton County General Health District inspector William Eickmeyer that they're considered a cottage food industry and exempt from licensing and inspection. The Ohio Department of Agriculture said the same thing.

Now the business is in full swing and because of all the donated materials, "everything we make goes to charity. I'd really like to expand so we could go to more businesses and make more money, but we're so busy with the ones we already have. We'd really need more bakers."

Cookies run 50 cents to \$1.25 and include chocolate chip, oatmeal, peanut butter and black and whites.

Black and whites? "They're iced half and half, white and dark. I got the idea as a kind of racial healing thing. They're really popular."

All the varieties are popular and, more important, get good reviews. "Very good. They never last the week out," says Steve Miklavic, CEO of Web design firm Primax. "The minute I heard about the idea I went to her Web site and signed up. The cookies are just like having Mom's cookies here."

Other customers think the same. Virginia Walker, Big Brothers & Big Sisters board member, gets three or four boxes a week for her office and can't keep them in stock. "They're gone within a day. As a board member, I can tell you that we appreciate very much what Sarah is doing, because as you know, every penny helps."

And yes, she says, they could sell more, too.

Sarah can't supply much more now, but maybe she can in the summer, when she hopes to have more time to rattle around her family's large, bright kitchen.

But summer is also shaping up to be busy. True, there'll be no school and no homework for the young entrepreneur who moved to Cincinnati eight years ago with her parents, two older sisters and her 9-year-old calico Zuzu, but there *will* be

her first trip into the job market, working at the snack bar at her swim club.

There'll also be daily swim team practice - "freestyle is my favorite stroke; the 50-meter sprint is my favorite race." Plus she'll be in training so she can try out for the high school cross country team.

Has a goal in mind

"The reason I want to make more money is because I have a goal right now of making \$750. That's what it costs to sponsor one Big Brother or Sister. I'd really feel good if we could do that. And I still want to be a Big Sister when I'm old enough."

Maybe she'll also be a professional baker. "My friend Elizabeth and I have thought about opening a coffee shop where we'd do all the baking.

"But there's college, too. I'm going, but I don't know where and I don't know what I'll study. I really like big cities, so I'll probably go away somewhere."

But first there's high school. "I'm looking forward to it, the change of scenery and everything. I'll probably go out for the swim team and cross country."

And she'll keep baking. "I love it. And it really makes me feel good to be able to help."

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