

Sweet SUCCESS

Rising
Entrepreneurs
pilot program
results in the
creation of 3
home-based
businesses

BY STEPHANIE JARNAGAN

Sixteen young adults with autism recently experienced the sweet taste of success upon completion of the pilot program of Rising Entrepreneurs, a SARRC Social Enterprise program funded by the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to provide adults with autism the skills to create and bake a signature product and start a home-based business.

The program equipped adults with autism with the skills to create a signature product as well as resources to successfully open a business, including workshops with an attorney, CPA and marketing expert.

Out of the group of 16, three home-based businesses have already been launched, including SMILE Biscotti by Matt Resnik, Essential Nourishment LLC by John Dalen, and Petie's Bakery by Robert Woodcock.

"We are continuing to support all of the program participants in year one and hopefully more businesses will be founded as a result," says SARRC Social Enterprise Manager Cece Russell.

MATT'S STORY: Sharing SMILES

WHEN MATT RESNIK, 22, graduated from Chaparral High School in the spring of 2013, his daily routines and patterns – developed for years within the same safe, supportive environment – came to an end. Even minor transitions are not easy for Matt who excels in math and computer skills, yet is significantly challenged by simple communications and social tasks.

"As parents, we needed to find something that would advance his skills, fill his daily schedule with meaningful activities and enable him to learn to support himself," says Denise Resnik, Matt's mom and co-founder of SARRC.

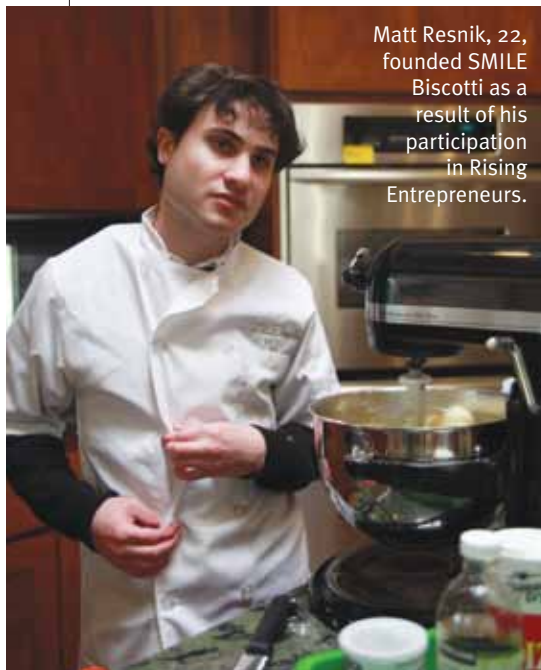
With the help of Rising Entrepreneurs, Resnik found a new routine and joy in the creation of SMILE Biscotti (an acronym for Supporting Matt's Independent Living Enterprise), developed as a result of his participation in the Rising Entrepreneurs pilot program.

The recipes originate from family Mandelbrot favorites and have generated an overwhelming response. Since he started selling in late October, Matt has baked, packaged, mailed and delivered more than 25,000 biscotti with the help of friends, family and Facebook.

SMILE Biscotti has been promoted through social media networks, his website development and lots of family and friends helping to spread the word. It's been a family endeavor with his father, Rob, focused on Matt's production skills and tasks, including shopping, baking, packaging, tracking

orders and product testing; mom, Denise, lending support on marketing, outreach and sales; Auntie Debbie setting up packaging systems in the dining room, affectionately known as the "Biscotti Cave;" and a village of friends, family and members of the community who have "liked" and shared Facebook messages, placed biscotti orders and offered encouragement every step of the way.

Resnik's goal is to sell 100,000 biscotti in his first year and build a business that grows beyond the Resnik home kitchen, employing other individuals on the autism spectrum or with related disorders.



Matt Resnik, 22, founded SMILE Biscotti as a result of his participation in Rising Entrepreneurs.

CHEMISTYLE



ANOTHER MATT: The Inspiration Behind Rising Entrepreneurs

MATT COTTLE, 25, founder of Stuttering King Bakery, served as the inspiration behind the Rising Entrepreneurs program. A graduate of SARRC's CulinaryWorks program, Cottle continued to develop his interest in baking and received one-

on-one baking lessons from a talented pastry chef for three years. In 2012, he took a leap of faith with his mom, Peggy, to open up his own home-based bakery.

Since then, the company has seen great success with its muffins, brownies, blondies, bars, cookies and scones, catering to business clientele and serving up a slice of heaven at local events. He handcrafts each pastry with high-quality, natural and locally sourced ingredients.

Cottle has made it his mission to positively impact the lives of other individuals with autism and serve as an inspiration for them to be productive, active members of the community.

"I want to inspire everyone in the autism community to make their dreams come true — to persevere tirelessly for success — because we deserve nothing short of incredible," Cottle says. "And to quote our bakery's own inspiration, King George VI, 'The highest of distinctions is service to others.'"

That's why Matt plans to eventually open his own brick-and-mortar bakery, where he'll employ and teach the art of baking to others with autism. He's well on his way toward that goal, and has received support from Seed Spot, a local business incubator, which has provided Cottle with an office to manage its business affairs, receive mentoring and grow his support network.

Like Cottle, SARRC recognizes the potential of individuals with autism and offers a collection of programs and services geared toward adults with autism, including Rising Entrepreneurs, through its Vocational & Life Skills Academy. ▶

For more information on Rising Entrepreneurs or CulinaryWorks programming at SARRC, contact Cece Russell at 602.606.9890 or crussell@autismcenter.org.

More to Bake

For more information on SARRC clients' talented bakery businesses launched as a result of the Rising Entrepreneurs program, or in Matt Cottle's case, the CulinaryWorks® program, please check out:

Essential Nourishment:

Started by John Dalen and serving up healthy energy bars. 602.535.5935

Petie's Bakery:

Launched by Robert Woodcock in honor of his Grandma "Petie" and serving up family recipes with a focus on gourmet breads, petiesbakery.com

SMILE Biscotti:

Developed by Matthew Resnik, SMILEBiscotti.com

Stuttering King Bakery:

Founded by Matt Cottle, stutteringkingbakery.com



John Dalen, a graduate of Rising Entrepreneurs, serves up his Essential Nourishment energy bars.