

THE OARACLE

Web Clipping

PROFILE

By Denise D. Resnik

The Road to Independence is Paved with Biscotti

Denise Resnik is the proud mother of a baker and budding entrepreneur. She is also president of DRA Strategic Communications and co-founder of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) in Phoenix, Ariz.



SMILE Biscotti's Matt Resnik in action in the kitchen. Photo courtesy of CherylStyle.

When our son, Matt, graduated from Chaparral High School in 2013 at the age of 22, the predictability of daily routines, individualized education plans (IEPs), and a safe, supportive environment came to an end. Transitions are not easy for a young adult with autism who excels in math, MapQuest, and a strong work ethic, yet remains significantly challenged by simple communications and social skills. How could we fill 164 hours every week with meaningful, productive activities for him? What would help Matt advance his skills, fill his daily schedule, and enable him to earn an income?

We found the answer through [SARRC](#) and its [Rising Entrepreneurs Program](#), made possible by a planning grant from the Arizona Departmental Disabilities

Planning Council. With the program's support, Matt created a bakery business based in our home named SMILE Biscotti (an acronym for Supporting Matt's Independent Living Enterprise).

The recipes originate from family Mandelbrot favorites and have generated a positive response. Matt has packaged, mailed, and delivered more than 30,000 biscotti in six months.

SMILE Biscotti is being marketed through social media networks, Matt's website (www.smilebiscotti.com), and holiday promotions. But the real support has come from 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.

Now that Matt has mastered baking, shopping, and packaging, the weeks ahead will be focused on helping him learn how to enter data and sales information. Matt's goal is to sell 100,000 biscotti and set up a business that grows beyond our home kitchen, employing other individuals on the autism spectrum or with related disorders.

Experiencing the sweetness of success is becoming a reality for Matt and others with autism as they share their skills and talents with the community.

To watch Matt in action, check out this short, sweet [film](#).