



David Beiler (left), President of David's "Awesome" Cookies, and his younger brother Sam Beiler II (right), Vice President.

David's "Awesome" Cookies

From hobby to lucrative business

In August 1999 the Beiler family of four took up residence in what is locally known as the Charles R. and Anna Ruhl home-
stead, located at 13600 Old Turnpike Road in Lewis Township, Union County PA.
When Sam and Sylvia Beiler moved into

their home along Route 45 little did they, or anyone else, know that their sons would build a lucrative business selling homemade cookies from their front porch.

David Beiler was born May 19, 1994 and his brother, Samuel Beiler II, was born April 13, 1997. As David approached school age Mr. and Mrs. Beiler set out to find a home within the Mifflinburg School District. At the time, Sylvia was employed by Children's Choice and had involvement with many school districts in central Pa. She was confident that the Mifflinburg School District would best meet their son's educational needs.

David's interest in baking began when he was in seventh grade. He was then enrolled in Mrs. Eberhart's Family Consumer Science class at Mifflinburg Middle School. David enjoyed the class and soon what he was learning in his FCS class turned into a hobby. It was on a Sunday evening in late winter 2007 when David decided to experiment making peanut butter cookies. There was a lot of trial and error within the Beiler kitchen as no one had baked cookies in their house for years. David and his Dad scoured the cabinets for ingredients and managed to mix up a batch of cookies. The first cookies David baked were not the quality that he was looking for, but he persevered. After a shopping trip for the precise ingredients David turned out a cookie that was delicious! They were a hit within the family, and David enjoyed making them. His younger brother, Sam II, enjoyed eating them. David's enthusiasm grew and soon, there were more cookies on hand than there were friends, classmates, family and co-workers of David's parents to share them with.

Sam thought it might be worthwhile to attempt to sell some of David's cookies, from the porch of their home! Mrs. Beiler wasn't so sure that people would buy the cookies from a roadside stand, or off a stranger's front porch. First came the name, David's "Awesome" Cookies. Sam didn't want to just put up a sign that said "cookies for sale". He felt it was important for the business to have a name. Although Sam has always felt that the word "Awesome" should be reserved for describing God, on that Saturday morning "Awesome" seemed quite appropriate for the business name. Initially handmade signs were propped against their mailbox. Now, handmade signs posted along Route 45 between Mifflinburg and Hartleton can be spotted within ¼ mile of the front porch of the Beiler home whenever the business is open. The recently updated signs were hand-painted by Katie Meiser of Mifflinburg, a friend of David and Sam II.

The front porch cookie business made its debut on Memorial Day 2007. The first introduced to customers was the peanut butter cookie. The initial goal was to sell five or six dozen cookies the first week and 50 dozen during that first season. They sold 18 dozen on the first day and approximately 1,000 dozen that first season!

The business quickly became more than David alone could handle, and the rest of the family became more involved. David, Sam II and Sylvia all help with the preparation and baking of the cookies. The cookies are all mixed, each one hand-rolled, and baked on Thursday. Yes, each cookie is hand-rolled before being baked! While doing all of that work in one day causes great stress, the final result is supreme. According to David, the end result is worth it! Rela-

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The Beiler brothers are open for business and awaiting customers' arrival at their front porch to purchase their home-made cookies.

cookies are fresh-baked, loaded with ingredients, and they taste good! He enjoys greeting the customers and playing his guitar on the front porch. David does most of the packaging and works with Mom in the bakery. Sam II enjoys the customer involvement, as he is the primary salesman and takes care of the finances, with Dad's help.

There are intense hours of preparation and baking. For a basic weekend the family works together to prepare 150 dozen cookies. For the first home Penn State football game of the season the number will increase by 50 dozen, and will climb from there throughout the last home game of the year. Incidentally, you can purchase football shaped and decorated Grandma's Molasses cookies during the football season. Sales on the last home game day of the 2008 football season were nearly 300 dozen cookies. The boys frequently sell out of cookies each weekend.

While the business keeps the family busy they still find time for other enjoyment. In addition to baking cookies, David enjoys folding origami, and plays a variety of instruments, which include the bass guitar, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, mountain dulcimer, banjo and he has even tickled the ivory on the piano. David's involvement at the Buffalo Valley Church of the Brethren includes the praise band, youth fund raisers, 30-hour famine, angel food ministry and he enjoys helping with the kid's splash camps. He particularly enjoys working with the children younger than third grade level, and the kids love him!

Sam II is also involved in the youth fund raising activities and has helped with the over third grade age group kids splash camps and angel food ministry at the Buffalo Valley Church of the Brethren. He is a percussionist in the Mifflinburg Middle School Band.

Once, a professor from Penn State University visited the roadside stand, enjoyed his cookies, left his business card and encouraged David to pursue a career in food service. Both of the boys are saving their profits from the sale of cookies for college. David is considering furthering his education in food service and / or music. Sam II would like to continue his education and become a lawyer or a politician. While saving their business proceeds is important, both boys have committed to contributing tithes to their home church. They feel it is important that God get His portion of their profits on a regular basis. They also recognize that their business has grown through God's blessing.

The growth of their business is greatly attributed to word of mouth. David says that is their best advertising. In August 2007 Sam introduced the David's "Awesome" Cookies website, www.davids-awesome-cookies.com and that has greatly benefited the business with pre-orders. The website is now maintained by David, which he finds advantageous with his schoolwork.

David (15) will be a sophomore this year, and Sam II (12) will be in seventh grade.

tive to all the work, David says, "It is enjoyable work. As long as it makes people happy we enjoy doing it."

With increased sales the business outgrew the family kitchen. In 2008 David and Sam II invested in an industrial Hobart mixer. This enables them to mix larger batches of cookies at one time. They also purchased a bake oven in September 2008, which was put into use for the 2009 cookie season. The oven has four racks and bakes eight-dozen cookies at one time. Sam converted a portion of the backyard workshop into a bakery just in time for the 2009 cookie season. This 8 x 12 non-air-conditioned building houses the mixer, oven, counter space, sink and some storage area. With exception of the temperamental Snickerdoodle cookie, all of the cookies are mixed, rolled and baked in the bakery. There are two refrigerators in an adjacent room for storing supplies as well. Frequent trips to Sam's Club are necessary. David and Sam II have learned much about the costs of doing business and the rewards relative to providing a quality product.

The entire family is committed to the business. They constantly focus on how they can satisfy their customers.

David believes the customers keep returning because the



David mixes a batch of cookies during our recent visit with the family. Thanks for sharing the "triple chippers" with the editor and his wife!

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Both are straight-A students. David left his mark at the Mifflinburg Area Middle School and now Sam II is known as “David’s brother”. Each of the boys is known among their peers as “cookie man”.

David’s Computer Keyboard Application teacher, Miss Hobbins, has suggested he take a class on entrepreneurship. It appears that David already knows much about entrepreneurship! David’s accomplishments in the business world are momentous, as he was diagnosed at age three with Asperger’s Syndrome, which is a high-functioning form of autism. This once quiet, shy, reclusive child is now the guitar-playing, joke telling, cookie baking individual behind David’s “Awesome” Cookies. His parents credit David’s development to early intervention, an extraordinary school system, and to David’s involvement with the public through the cookie business. David shared that through this business he has realized that he can accomplish anything. He wants to be a beacon for others who may question their potential.

Decision-making is a group effort, and is often accomplished over the dinner table. As the business grows, and more of the responsibility shifts towards Sylvia she also has more say in the decision-making process. Both David and Sam II recognize that their parents have been vital to the business. Sam and Sylvia are not on payroll: they volunteer their time. As David puts it, “Mom works so hard for so little. She enjoys the customer interaction – she is a relational person.”

Some of the more memorable customers that have stopped by their roadside stand were a gentleman that was running across America, an Amish wagon train, and the customer that commented, “Nobody’s going to believe that I bought these off a porch!”

A question that is commonly asked is whether the business is licensed and inspected. Yes, David’s “Awesome” Cookies is licensed and inspected by the Pa. Department of Agriculture.

The most popular cookie is the Chocolate Chip cookie. The boys also sell Grandma’s Molasses, Macadamia Nut / White Chocolate Chip, Monster, Oatmeal Raisin, M & M, Snickerdoodle, Peanut Butter, Triple Chipper and Sugar cookies. The Grandma’s Molasses cookie recipe is a family heirloom, which came from David’s Grandmother. Last season David’s “Awesome” Cookies sold 3,000 dozen cookies!

New this year is the option to purchase individual cookies at the cost of .50 / cookie. Packaged cookies come in a bakers dozen of 13 and cost \$5.00. Party trays are also available by pre-ordering. David’s “Awesome” Cookies have been ordered for a wedding reception and their largest order (30 dozen cookies) was placed by St. Pius X Catholic Church in Selinsgrove to celebrate their expansion project a couple of years ago.



The Beiler brothers set up their table at the Millmont Yard Sale in June 2007. This was just a few weeks after their debut. On that day they sold 30 dozen cookies!



Lindsay Shively of Millmont makes a purchase from the front porch of the Beiler home.

Sam recognizes that the growth of the business presents an ongoing challenge. The possibilities are endless. David’s “Awesome” Cookies has been approached about providing their cookies to restaurants and coffee shops. However, that type of business expansion is too much of a challenge right now. The family is utilizing the bakery space they have available and with both boys returning to school, and both parents working full-time jobs it seems an impossibility to expand at this time. Mr. Beiler sees the business as well rooted, and they don’t want it to die. But they don’t know how to grow it with their current limitations.

The inquiries for shipping cookies have increased as well. However, the time involved in packaging and the costs of shipping have led the family to come to an agreement to halt all shipping. People have come from near and far for David’s “Awesome” Cookies, and the family is happy to meet their needs, from their front porch.

The cookie season begins in late April and continues through the last home Penn State game. During the summer months the front porch is open from 12:30 – 7:30 on Fridays and on Satur-

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David awaits customers on the front porch of his home. Photo courtesy of www.davids-awesome-cookies.com.

days from 8:30 until 2:30. Once the school year begins the business will be open from 3:30 until 7:30 on Fridays and on Saturday from 8:00 a.m. until noon or later depending on Penn State game schedule. No Sunday sales.

While David took up cookie baking as a hobby, no one knows where David's "Awesome" Cookies may take him and the rest of the Beiler family. Perhaps David's talents in the kitchen and in the business world were inherited. He is related to Anne Beiler, founder of Auntie Anne's Pretzels. Her humble beginning was at a small stand as well. Who knows where this front porch business may take David and his "Awesome" cookies.

Editors note: Information for this article was taken from The Daily Item, Standard Journal and York Daily. Special thanks to the Beiler family for opening your home and sharing so much about David's "Awesome" Cookies.

Editors post-publication note: This story is an excerpt from the September 2009 issue of The Millmont Times, and has been provided as such to David's "Awesome" Cookies for distribution to their customers. To view The Millmont Times in its entirety, please visit www.millmonttimes.com