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Automotive buyout paves way for entrepreneurial dream

SOUTHFIELD -- Crystal Scott's transformation from Chrysler assembly line worker to cookie entrepreneur is one of determination, focus and confidence in her ability to realize a dream that began when she was seven.

After taking a buyout from the automaker during the depth of the recession, Scott finished her bachelor degree studies, applied and was accepted into Walsh College's master's program. While studying at Walsh, she learned of her college's LaunchPad entrepreneurial initiative and soon joined the cost-free program that welcomes students and alumni from any major.

"I wanted to see if they could enhance or help me move my business along," said Scott, owner of Cookies by Chris.

"Crystal already had a fabulous product when she came to us for guidance and advice," said Walsh LaunchPad Director Carol Glynn. "Our focus was to create exposure for her product, research and recommend competitive pricing and help her develop a scalable business plan."

When quotes for liability insurance proved confusing and prohibitive, Glynn put Scott in touch with a Walsh alumnus who owned an insurance agency. "He offered to take a look at an out-of state-policy I was considering and advised me to take it," said Scott. "The camaraderie evident throughout the membership of this program makes me realize I have a strong support network." Such support was evident this past winter when Scott's cookies were featured for sale during a special holiday event at the Birmingham boutique "other FUN Stuff!" Owner Denise Kulak opened the specialty shop in 2012 after being mentored by LaunchPad.

Offering more than 30 varieties of cookies from the standard chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin to the inventive lime white chocolate chip, honey brown butter sugar, bourbon pecan with cinnamon cream cheese chocolate and margarita with tequila lime glaze - her s'mores sandwich cookie has been an especially huge seller this summer on Sundays at her Eastern Market stall. "I like it when a customer eats the cookie in front of me, Scott confided. "I wait for the second yum."

Scott said she was able to acquire a coveted Eastern Market spot after several attempts. "They were impressed that I operated under Michigan's Cottage Food Law, regulations that my LaunchPad team informed me about and recommended."

Inspired by her grandmother, who began baking pies in her late 70's and selling them to her church members - Scott advises other would-be entrepreneurs to do their research, develop a good business plan and take baby steps. "Don't try to bite off more than you can chew. Once you have made the commitment, trust your instincts and ride it through."

Moving forward, Scott would eventually like to create a slice and bake cookie product and perhaps own a food-truck offering cookies, shots of milk and water. For now, Cookies by Chris is primarily providing cookies for events and showcasing at fairs, farmer's markets and special venues. Customers reach Scott by email at cdscott44@yahoo.com or by calling 248-672-7436.

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