

Young entrepreneur savours "Sweet" smell of success



By Brock Weir

As she entered her pre-teens, Avery Benlolo was becoming frustrated with the dry and itchy skin on her hands.

Nothing seemed to work: she tried out the various products at places like Shopper's Drug Mart, perused the cosmetics aisle, but nothing quite got the situation under control.

Eventually, the inventive student decided to take matters into her own hands, looking online for remedies that might help.

?I searched online and found ingredients that were already in my house and I made different samples from there,? she explains. ?Coconut oil is a product that works really well in exfoliating skin. I tried it and showed it to my family and they all told me they liked it and it just went from there. I decided to start buying my own things and make more products.

Where it went from there is Sweet Scrubs & Stuff ? a business spearheaded by the 12-year-old Aurora resident, who plans to set up shop again this Saturday at the Aurora Farmers' Market ? a return visit where her first foray into the business world created something of a hit.

Her experiments in the kitchen first hit upon a coconut lime scrub, which was a hit with her friends and family. It was then they encouraged her to branch out into more scents and flavours.

?I got to the Aurora Farmers' Market every weekend with my mom, but I didn't really know after looking around where I could sell the stuff,? says the Country Day School student. ?I then decided the Market was the perfect place to do it. I registered for the Market and waited to hear back. When I did, I got my dates and started making lists of what I needed for what I already made.?

With some chauffeured shopping and some seed money from her parents, she was ready to go and first hit the Market in May.

?The first Market date was amazing and I think I did really well,? she says. ?It was a good experience for me and I got a lot of good responses from everyone who came to the Market. The next week I was there, everyone I saw on my first day said they showed it to their family, they all loved it, and it kept [the momentum] going more. It made me really happy that a lot of people were thinking well of what I was doing.?

That first date, Avery was only selling scrubs. Her first creation, she believes, was a lavender vanilla combo, but by the time the second date rolled around, she had expanded her product line to include bath bombs. This Saturday, she is debuting a line of four body scrubs ? coconut lime, lavender vanilla, gingerbread and citrus, along with grapefruit, vanilla and lavender bath bombs.

One scrub sells for \$5, two scrubs for \$9, and three scrubs for \$13. Bath bombs go three for \$2.

?I just like to break even every day so I am not losing anything from what I have bought,? says Avery.

What money she has made is going straight into savings, laying the groundwork for future business expansion as well as keeping an eye on her post-secondary education. Passionate about math and science, as well as language arts, her goal right now is to pursue a university career with a goal to become a pediatrician. But, she admits, she is still young and this path is subject to change!

?I want to do well in school, and I want to go to a good university,? she says. ?I would like it if this business went a bit bigger, but right now I think I am in the perfect position where I am, and at the Farmers' Market. If you think of an idea, you just have to go for it. At the beginning, when I had my idea, I didn't think it would go anywhere. I just thought I would be giving it to my friends and family to use. But, when I got accepted into the Farmers' Market, I just knew it was going to start a bridge. For anyone younger than me, if you have an idea and you're looking to do something, just go for it. If you fail, you can just try again.?