

Couple opens custom bakery in Fairview Heights, gets sweet advice along the way

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From left: Mascoutah residents and Belleville natives Liz and Bob Toepfer are enjoying sweet success with their new business, Lizzie Bob's Sweets from Scratch, now located in Fairview Heights.

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS — Locally-owned Lizzie Bob's Sweets from Scratch will open a storefront location beginning Tuesday, Nov. 15, offering an array of homemade, freshly-baked treats.

The storefront location in Fairview Heights will be open Tuesday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Co-owner Liz Toepfer has a long history of using her baking talents in a positive way. As an Air Force wife, Toepfer baked for fellow military spouses, friends, family members and anyone in need of emotional support during a difficult time. Now that her husband has retired from the Air Force, the Belleville native, and mother of two, has opened Lizzie Bob's Sweets from Scratch LLC to bake for customers, and their family and friends' special occasions.

Lizzie Bob's Sweets from Scratch officially formed in mid-February 2015. Co-owners Liz and Bob Toepfer, who live in Mascoutah, contacted the Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center last year at the advice of banker and SCORE President John Vitale.

"I went to the bank to apply for a loan, and that's when I met John Vitale," said Liz Toepfer. "John said that although we closed on the bank loan, he highly recommended the SBDC as a resource."

The Toepfers met with SBDC Small Business Specialist and Interim Director Jo Ann DiMaggio May to gain expertise in writing a business plan. Liz Toepfer said May connected them with a number of valuable contacts including the names of real estate agents, accountants and attorneys. Toepfer said she has regularly received additional support from May in the form of articles on how to start and operate a small business and notifications to attend networking events.

"Jo Ann did a tremendous job in walking us through the process of starting a small business," Liz Toepfer said. "The expertise she provided to us was instrumental in building our business, and the fact that it did not cost us anything is incredible. I'd recommend the Metro East SBDC to any entrepreneur or small-business owner in need of assistance."

May encouraged Toepfer to consider leasing as opposed to buying a property to open their storefront. BARBERMurphy Group Broker Associate Tony Smallmon worked with the couple in helping them find and lease a 1,000-square-foot storefront in a shopping center at 823 Lincoln Highway, Suite 102 in Fairview Heights, less than a mile from St. Clair Square.

"Our landlords, Marty Hubbard and Robbie Mize, have been very kind and generous in helping remodel the space for our bakery," Liz Toepfer said. Lizzie Bob's storefront location will offer custom-designed cakes, pies, brownies, cinnamon rolls, cannoli, cheesecake and more. It will also feature fresh-baked, natural dog treats and pupcakes for canines.

"All of our sweets are made from scratch – no mixes, no preservatives," she said. "Some of our recipes come from my Aunt Marilyn who owned Marilyn's Pie Pantry in Belleville for many years. She passed away a few years ago, but she created a book filled with her pie and quiche recipes. I cherish that book and am delighted to use her recipes in my new business."

May said working with the Toepfers has been gratifying. "Liz and Bob work hard to satisfy their customers' sweet tooth. They also love networking and making new connections. I know they will be successful and I look forward to assisting them along the way."

The bakery's Facebook page has attracted orders from across the country, according to Liz Toepfer. "We've been blown away by the momentum and the growth of our business," she said.

Deliveries are available locally for a small fee. Toepfer said her long-range business plan is to also offer nationwide shipping for online customers and a bakery expansion to include a full lunch menu and commercial resale of products to other businesses.

For more information about Lizzie Bob's Sweets from Scratch, call (618) 334-4917 or visit the store's Facebook page, facebook.com/lizziebobsbakery/.

To learn how the SBDC can help a small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at (618) 650-2929 or sbdcedw@gmail.com (<mailto:sbdcedw@gmail.com>).

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