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Life

October 2012



SWEET SUCCESS

The 'Toffee Kids' Grow Up

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It has been six years since Leah Post and Brandon Weimer imagined a toffee company to raise money for a school trip to Italy. Today, the college seniors are the owners of a Rancho Mirage toffee empire, Brandini Toffee. Read about their journey and future plans for the company.

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Brandon "Brandini" Weimer and Leah Post know toffee and business.

Courtesy of Brandon Weimer and Leah Post



The iconic Bob Hope golf cart.

Courtesy of Palm Desert Chamber



Murder is serious fun for Mary Firmin.

Photo by Brian Maurer

Cover Photo of Brandini Toffee's Brandon Weimer & Leah Post, by Angela Weimer



Rancho Mirage Life

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'Toffee Kids'

The Sweet Taste of Success for Brandini Toffee Six Years Later

By Kathy Strong

Leah Post and Brandon Weimer look like two All-American college seniors dreaming of a bright future. What you might not guess is they have already made a huge stride in achieving those dreams, at the ripe "old" age of 21.

The young entrepreneurs who imagined Brandini Toffee as teens are now in the historic company of hard-working, forward-thinking youth like inventor Thomas Edison and lesser known Krysta Morlan, whose own experience with cerebral palsy motivated her to invent the portable Cast Cooler in tenth grade.

In fact, the humble pair said that most of their college friends aren't even aware they own a toffee company. "I just never bring it up," said Brandon. "We both have part-time jobs when we are away at school... I don't drive a Ferrari. In fact, we both get paid \$91 every two weeks—we reinvest everything in the business." "I drive my great-grandmother's Honda Accord with a window that won't roll up," said Leah. "I have to work to pay for groceries and my rent.... This is our work ethic."

Post's and Weimer's journey to sweet success shares some things in common with other teen phenoms: supportive families and the drive to reach their goals, despite their young ages.

From monkey bars to Rome

If you believe in destiny, then when Leah Post and Brandon Weimer met in preschool in the desert it was no coincidence. It was an association that would endure and unite two families for many years to come.

"Leah and I each had little sisters the same ages as well," said Brandon who just returned from the second annual family vacation of the Post-Weimer families. "Our moms got to know each other... Our families became close."

The two friends continued on through school years together, eventually attending La Quinta High School. During their freshman year, the pair's English teacher announced a planned trip to Italy. "We were very excited about the possibility of going," said Leah, "but our parents said we had to find a way to pay for the trip ourselves... But we were too young to get jobs."

"We were sitting in Leah's backyard trying to come up with an idea," said Brandon. "I had this recipe for toffee from a friend of the family that I had made my own since I love to cook. My dad is the general manager at a resort and arranged



The first big toffee-selling event was Art Affaire in Rancho Mirage. Courtesy of Brandon Weimer and Leah Post



Friends since age four, the two are certified scuba divers. Photo by Angela Weimer

"We both have part-time jobs when we are away at school... I don't drive a Ferrari. In fact, we both get paid \$91 every two weeks—we reinvest everything in the business."

-Brandon Weimer

for us to use a side kitchen; and Leah's dad offered to make us a website and logo."

The two teens were suddenly in the toffee-making business. And business took off rapidly. "We created a brand with 'Brandini'," said Brandon who had carried the nickname since a tot. "It has worked well for us."



At the Fancy Food Show in San Diego, Leah and Brandon were the youngest ever allowed on the sales floor.

Courtesy of Brandon Weimer and Leah Post

Next, they began selling their toffee by setting up tables at both the Palm Springs VillageFest and COD Street Fair.

“Our first big event was at Rancho Mirage’s Art Affaire,” said Brandon. “We passed out thousands of samples... The biggest reward was seeing people almost as excited as we were—they wanted us to succeed.”

Within a couple of months, the duo had paid for their European trips, plus earned spending money. In the spring of 2007, Leah and Brandon toured Assisi, Florence, Pisa and Rome—a trip fueled by chocolate, hard work and lots of community and family support.

Bravos from Oprah and Martha

When an idea is good and nurtured correctly with marketing, grit and perseverance, Leah and Brandon learned that it can take on a life of its own.

Even though the duo had reached their goal of Italy, they felt it was a shame to put an end to a growing business. “We moved the production to a shop in La Quinta for a couple of years then found this space in Rancho Mirage,” said Brandon. “It was time for Leah and I take our own paths to college, but we weren’t ready to give up on Brandini.”

The 5,200-square-foot shop, located in a former Coco’s restaurant in Rancho Mirage, was an ideal location to move all of Brandini’s operations, from retail and shipping to production. With Brandon and Leah off to college—Brandon to the University of Arizona and Leah to Cal Poly San

Four Tips for Teen Success

1. Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t do it.
2. Do the best job you can. Always give 110%.
3. Believe in yourself, and don’t rely on other people.
4. Don’t be afraid of working hard and sacrificing fun to reach your goals.

“To know that people all around the world thought that our chocolate was the most outstanding was a turning point for me. My favorite quote is from Henry Ford: ‘If you think you can or can’t, you are right.’ The power of the mind to succeed is everything.”

—Leah Post

Luis Obispo—the business became the full-time careers of the couple’s mothers—Angela Weimer and Maggie Post who gave up her full-time position at Wally’s Desert Turtle as the restaurant’s special events coordinator. The two mothers work side by side every day in all aspects of the business, from shipping and ordering to overseeing staff and daily bookkeeping. But to the moms, it is a labor love. “We also take the toffee to festivals out of town,” said Angela. “We attend about seven festivals a year, selling the products and handing out samples,” said Angela Weimer. “I love seeing the positive effect the company is having on customers.”

National awards and media attention came swiftly with an appearance by the two on the “Martha Stewart Show” and “The Food Network,” as well as a favorite-things nod from Oprah. “We got a Gold Sofi Award which was huge,” said Brandon. “We were the first toffee company to get the national candy award and the first ones under age 18 to receive it.”

“At the Fancy Food Show where we got the award, we were actually escorted to the children’s area by security,” laughed Leah. “No one under 18 was allowed on the display floor... We got an exception.”

“To know that people all around the world thought that our chocolate was the most outstanding was a turning point for me,” said Leah who had planned a career in robotics up to that time. “My favorite quote is from Henry Ford: ‘If you think you can or can’t, you are right.’ The power of the mind to succeed is everything.”

Brandini Toffee now employs about fifteen and ships its dozen products to more than 60 businesses all over the country.

“We have just made two new products for Nordstrom’s private label,” said Brandon. “They will be sending the toffee peanut poppers and cashew almond poppers to about 90 stores... We are planning about 20-30 percent growth this year. When it

Brandini Toffee

**42-560 Bob Hope Drive,
Rancho Mirage**

(760) 200-1598;

www.brandinitoffee.com

Open 7 days a week, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m



The Post and Weimer families take annual vacations together. From left, the Weimer family: Brandon, Angela, Brad and Brielle holding ‘Scottie.’ The Post family: Sarah, Justin, Maggie and Leah.

Photo by Angela Weimer

comes down to it (making) money is not the factor. We are building a brand.”

Beyond Nordstrom

Both Leah and Brandon graduate college in 2013, Leah in Business and Brandon in Communications, leaving them free to return to Brandini. Or, will they? “I know I want to come back to the desert,” said Brandon. “In the bigger picture, I can’t see selling Brandini—this has become a family business.”

“Mainly, if it wasn’t for the support of our parents and the community here in the desert, there is no way we would have been able to do this.”

—Leah Post

More Inspiring Teens



According to Leah, this period after graduation is a great opportunity to garner valuable work experience. “I want to see Brandini expand and reach its potential,” said Leah who is preparing for interviews. “But we need ‘real world’ experience to do this... After all, we’ve been doing this for a quarter of our lives.”

Another national award looms for Brandini Toffee as well. “We are up for the Entrepreneurial Award for Impact 100,” said Brandon. “If we get it, we will be one of 100 businesses selected with owners under age 30 and will be going to the White House.”

The Post and Weimer families have become so close that they take annual vacations together, pictured above is this summer’s trip to Laguna Beach. The Weimer family, consisting of Brandon, Angela, Brad and Brielle and the Post family, consisting of Sarah, Justin, Maggie and Leah, are more than friends and business associates; they are more like family according to both Leah and Brandon.

“Mainly, if it wasn’t for the support of our parents and the community here in the desert, there is no way we would have been able to do this,” said Leah who credits the close-knit community with making success possible. “We could have never done this in Orange County or a larger city area.”

“We live in a community that truly supports youth who want to make it... There was no better place to start Brandini Toffee.”

Teen successes like Brandon and Leah are not as rare as one might think. In fact, teens and younger have been credited with a number of inventions and enterprising businesses—some born from practicality. Some just from the fertile minds of youth.

1. Louis Braille was just 15 when he invented the ingenious method of reading and writing by using raised dots, known as Braille.

2. At age 17, Chester Greenwood applied for a patent for an item that kept his ears warm. For the following 60 years, his factory made earmuffs.

3. Jacob Dunnack was only six years old when he came up with a combined baseball bat that also held balls. Toys R Us agreed it was a great idea and began carrying the JD Batball in 2000.

4. Elise and Evan MacMillan co-founded The Chocolate Farm, a gourmet chocolate business, and are teen millionaires today.

5. Kelly Reinhart designed “Thigh Packs” at age six, a holster for carrying kids’ things—from video games to cell phones. At age nine she became chairperson of TPAK, a company with \$1 million in orders.