

# After building a big business, this child entrepreneur is ready for college and thirsty for more success

With sales in all 50 states, the doubling of production in '22 and an Inc. 5000 rank, she's on fire

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ME & THE BEES

Mikaila Ulmer on stage at the Achievements in Black Austin gala in 2019.

Four-year-old [Mikaila Ulmer](#) wanted to sell lemonade and save the bees; her parents didn't dismiss her passion and instead they learned step-by-step how to nurture that dream. Now that she's 17, the founder and CEO of Me & the Bees Lemonade expects to produce 4 million lemonade bottles this year.

Through the support of her parents and the company's seven total employees, Me & the Bees made it into the class of 2022 of the Inc. 5000, which ranks the fastest growing companies in America.

"I think kids love to spend time with their parents, so any time they have a curiosity and you can give them attention to expand on that curiosity, that fuels their innovation," said Mikaila's mother and company CMO, [D'Andra Ulmer](#), on raising a child entrepreneur. "We're not pushing her to do one thing or the next, we're just responding to the curiosity and bringing her information."

Mikaila's parents never thought of themselves as raising an entrepreneur.

[Theo Ulmer](#), Mikaila's father and the company's chief operating officer, said they were just coaching their daughter. If she needed guidance, support or direction, they stepped in — other than that, she was growing into her position and making decisions. Responsibilities grew gradually, but there were some limits on what she could do.

"She's not driving around delivering the product when she's nine or 10 years old. So we would step in at that point. We don't offer keys," Theo joked.

Allowing Mikaila to make decisions is what polishes her entrepreneurial skills, he explained.

Mikaila learned how to balance school, business and extracurriculars over the past 13 years. To make time for the interview with Austin Business Journal, Mikaila picked up a call after school and right before her climbing practice. She finds time during her off-period, weekends and summer to work, but she still takes time to be a kid and prioritize school.

The new challenge that lays ahead for Mikaila is choosing which one of the prestigious universities that are buzzing around her she should attend. Going to college means releasing some work responsibilities, maybe even a title change, but Mikaila wants to gain knowledge to apply in her business.

Her major is undecided, but she knows that her next four years will be used to learn and give back to her campus. Mikaila is already poised in giving speeches, a skill she picked up watching her mother, talking to customers about her product and visiting schools to talk to other children about entrepreneurship.

Mikaila is looking into global studies as a way to carry her bee mission abroad. She is also considering a major called Design, Technology and the Business of Innovation as a way to learn more about technology, virtual reality and augmented reality to make social change and learn about user interface.

“There are no limits to what I could bring to Me and the Bees with this kind of education,” Mikaila said.

Even without the added education, the company is making strides. Since 2009, Mikaila and the Bees LLC produced 5 million lemonade bottles. The company plans to double last year’s 2 million bottle production in 2022.

It is also adding a second production facility in the second quarter to keep up with the demand as the lemonade sits in more than 4,000 retail stores across all 50 states. Mikaila & the Bees uses United Natural Foods Inc and KeHE Distributors LLC as its wholesale distributors, to make the deliveries to the thousands of stores.



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