

All City Candy Sells Sweet Memories

by Douglas J. Guth

Nostalgia is a powerful emotion, one that gives its invoker sentimental affection for a cheerful time in their lives. Elisabeth Sapell finds her happy place amid the colorful hues and heady smells of candy, carrying pleasant recollections of biking to a delicatessen as a child to peruse the promising racks of flavored toothpicks and pumpkin seeds.

Beachwood resident Sapell opened her confectionary supermarket in late October and is selling sweet memories out of a sugar-scented, 5,000-square-foot space at 746 Richmond Road, in Richmond Heights. The bulging bins and racks overflow with familiar brands of hard-shelled chocolates and jelly beans along with a healthy assortment of retro taste treats from which customers can mix and match. The store also carries a selection of kosher, sugar-free and gluten-free items marked with stickers to make shopping easy for customers with dietary restrictions.

"We get new product every week, and we're always reaching out to new vendors," says Sapell.

Patrons have requested enough of their favorite candies to fill up ten pages of a wish book Sapell has on site. "It's a recession-proof business," she says of her brightly lit goody playground. "Even in tough times people can afford a treat."

When providing tasty reminiscences, it helps to have romantic notions for the product at hand. Sapell believes Taffy, for example, reminds the newbie entrepreneur of trips to the beach with her father, while Sno Caps bring back memories of battling over a box of the chocolate candies with her sister.

"It takes us back to more innocent days" Sapell says.

Visitors to the store both young and old have come to Sapell with their own sweet reflections triggered by spotting a favorite indulgence. One young woman entering the shop unloosed a



Pictured from left: All City Candy employees Josh and Sarah Raiffe; Ribbon Cutting with Slider, Elisabeth Sapell and Jelly Belly; Sappel's kids, from left: Max Posner, Sarah Raiffe, Jamie Posner, Josh Raiffe, Casey Posner and Samantha Raiffe.

piercing scream at the earthly delights before her.

"I thought she had fallen down," says Sapell. "She was just excited, but it scared the heck out of us."

While most reactions are not so extreme, the shop owner is glad to bring fun to the retail experience, a state of being Sapell fondly recalls from her days of working in the family grocery store, Sapell's Bi-Rite, in Lakewood. Back then, she felt a natural affinity to building something from the ground up and making it work.

"There was a camaraderie there," says Sapell. "The business was a great way to connect with my parents and siblings."

After years of working in management at a medical office and synagogue, Sapell wanted to return to her grassroots – to create something she could



share with husband David Posner and their six children. The family loved the idea of a candy store, and now Sapell's kids, ages 11 to 21, are among All City Candy's 20 employees, with tasks that include stocking shelves and working the register.

"They're learning how to run a business," Sapell says.

The candy shop's proprietor is learning, too. Business has been solid since the store opened, but marketing has been a challenge, as literally everyone who likes sweets is a potential customer.

All City Candy has used social media to market itself, notes Sapell, and later this year will sell its wares online, a move that could significantly increase business. Sapell is also exploring

other opportunities, with possibilities that include hosting birthday parties and selling corporate gift baskets.

Though there's no certainty in retail, the early returns have been more than positive, maintains Sapell. Walls packed with Razzles, Fizzies, M&Ms, Moon Pies, licorice rolls, and other sugary pleasures already have customers thanking the shop owner for the memories.

If Sapell has her way, the children of today will be relaying their nostalgia-fueled stories of All City Candy decades from now, much as Sapell's mind faithfully embraces the candy-stocked deli she visited all those years ago.

"I want us to be remembered," she says. "Grandmas should be telling their grandkids about us."