

Never Too Young for a **DREAM**

BY BRITTANY FLETCHER



I had an early childhood ambition to be a teacher, but by my middle school years decided that I wanted to own my own business. Little did I know then that my parents' and grandparents' interest and involvement with baking would lead me to becoming co-owner of the Black Forest Bakery and Deli.

In the eleventh grade, I took a Home Economics course and found out I had a knack for baking and it really got me involved. I found out it was something I was actually good at. My work release class made it possible for me to find a job related to my baking interest at the Black Forest Bakery, an established local business.

I was given the jobs that were hard, but not involved directly in doing the baking and the work conditions were difficult because of the heat and there was no air conditioning. I think it was a test by the owner who asked me if I really wanted to work under these conditions. I started as a helper, but eventually worked my way up to head baker responsible for everything and held it down by myself.

I soon found out the owner was going to sell out or close and I started to imagine trying to keep it up after a potential buyer backed down on buying the bakery. From joking around about how to keep the bakery going, I went to my dad. I thought he would think I was crazy, but he showed some interest to begin with, then backed down because he thought the sales price was too high for the bakery.

I continued to talk with some of the employees and then approached my grandparents, who at first said no, but then my grandmother said yes and began to get excited and my grandfather was able to negotiate a much better sales price. Then with money that I saved from my paychecks and some college funds my great grandmother had put aside for me, I went in with

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my grandparents, David and Heidi Fletcher, and bought the business. We then moved the hometown bakery of over 30 years across to my side of town because of property lease problems.

With my parents' and grandparents' previous business experiences, they helped make it possible for me to move the equipment, develop a business plan and open the Black Forest bakery and Deli at its new location.

Running a business as a new co-owner is difficult and requires long hours and much energy. When I'm questioned about our prices, I always mention that we are not a grocery store and I take care with our bakery products made each day with real taste and always fresh.

At 19, I am younger than most of the people who work for me, a situation that makes an already tough job a little harder. Yes the days can be long and the work can be hard, but the "amazing" aroma of baking and being my own boss make it all worth it.

In the next year, I plan to take over the bakery completely. This will relieve my grandparents from having to assist me financially as well as helping in the deli. I plan on continuing to hone my bakery skills and improve my artistic baking creations. □

Black Forest Bakery and Deli

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