

Young entrepreneurs start businesses for SAE projects

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Animal care, bratwurst sales teach teens about money, people skills and more.

Because of physical limitations, Betty Volkman can't walk Snuggles anymore.

No problem.

Gothenburg High School sophomore Jessica Schmidt knocks on Volkman's apartment door at Stone Hearth Estates where the terrier is waiting, wagging his tail.

In a few minutes, Schmidt is walking Snuggles around Lake Helen. Occasionally, they stop and Schmidt tosses a ball which Snuggles retrieves.

A couple of miles south—in the Pamida parking lot—classmate Abbie Mazour hands a long bratwurst, wrapped in a bun, and soda and chips, to a customer.

"Hope you enjoy your meal," Mazour calls from behind a window in a concession trailer.

MK Concessions (for Mazour Kids) is the name of the business since Mazour is helped by her three younger siblings and their parents.

Both enterprises are businesses the teens chose for their supervised agricultural experience (SAE) which is a requirement for all students who belong to the Future Farmers of America organization.

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Mazour and Schmidt are members of the GHS chapter.

Schmidt said her project evolved from a desire to raise money to travel to Washington, D.C. for a National Young Leaders Conference.

“I started taking care of people’s animals for them,” said the self-professed animal lover.

By feeding, taking care of and often playing with pets—plus selling baked goods, cleaning houses and mowing and raking lawns—Schmidt raised enough money to pay for her plane ticket and buy souvenirs.



When more people began asking for her animal-care services, she decided to use the business for her SAE project.

Since then she’s added re-

sponsibilities such as spending the night at a home to care for a dog, taking care of both pets and a home, giving baths to dogs and more.

“It’s kind of whatever an owner wants me to do on a daily basis,” Schmidt explained.

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Mazour decided to sell grilled bratwurst from Lone Wolf Wurst Meats of Eustis at her father's suggestion.

"He said it was the best brat he'd ever eaten," she said.

Chandler Mazour accompanied his daughter to an attorney's office to form a limited liability company and to a local bank for a five-year loan to buy a concession trailer, generator, the product and other necessities.

The family traveled to Kansas to pick up the trailer.

She also decided to sell hot dogs, German pretzels (bought from a woman in Eustis) and chips and soda to make a meal.

Since the beginning of summer, Mazour and family members have thrown in a grill, hooked up the trailer and traveled to festivals in different towns to sell their product. Mazour has also set up shop locally in the Pamida parking lot in Gothenburg.

Because school starts next week, Mazour said she won't sell sausage again until the Saturday of Harvest Festival which is Sept. 17 in Gothenburg.

For their projects, both teens track how long they work, what they do and how much money they make.

Schmidt said she's learned better people and communication skills and patience.

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“It’s different communicating over the telephone than in person,” she said. “I’ve learned to deal with different types of people and getting the information that I need.”

Schmidt said it’s important that she likes what she does.

“I like animals and want to be a vet,” she said. noting that she has two dogs, four cats and a horse.

For Mazour, there’s much more to starting and operating a business than meets the eye such as forming the company and choosing signage.

“It also teaches me how to handle finances,” she said.

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