How this Healthy Snack Brand is Serving a Greater Purpose

When Jennifer Wiese's son, Auggy, was 12, he was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum. She soon discovered how emphasizing whole food ingredients in his diet could make a difference, which is how BeeFree Warrior Snacks began.

"He was just more generally aware of his surroundings," said Jennifer, founder of BeeFree. "He was able to pay attention at school and focus better. It wasn't a cure by any means, but it really allowed his body systems to work more optimally."

Jennifer says her business grew organically. She quickly figured out the answer to supporting Auggy, the oldest of her four boys, wasn't creating a diet just for him but taking a holistic approach. Jennifer and her mom got busy in their kitchen redoing favorite family recipes with a healthier twist.

Because gluten-free goods were not readily available in their small community north of Indianapolis, Jennifer began providing her gluten-free food and snacks at events. Soon, she was getting requests for recipes. Seeing this demand, the family began selling their foods at the local farmers market – and selling out, which led her to begin approaching some stores.

The family experienced a special moment in 2018 when their favorite grocery store began carrying their products.

"I was a Meijer shopper in my town, and I wanted my community to be able to shop at Meijer and buy our product," she said.

While volunteering for the Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give, Jennifer met the Meijer Supplier Diversity team and learned more about how to bring her brand to our shelves. The next year, she was invited to the tournament's supplier diversity luncheon, where she had the opportunity to further network with the team and as a result, the brand recently joined our Meijer Grow Academy. This program helps diverse businesses every step of the way, presenting material on brand strategy, marketing, product packaging, operating processes, and distribution capabilities, among other topics.

"I feel like working with Meijer is different from working with other retailers, just from the standpoint of their human element," Jennifer said. "That makes it really nice to build a relationship, and it's just not that way with all retailers."

BeeFree's five flavors are named after members of the Wiese Family, with the original flavor called Auggy's Original. Others are Bob's Salted Caramel, Clay's Chocolate Buzz, Hagen's Berry Bomb and Mae's Apple Pie.

Now 28 years old, Auggy is involved in the business and continues to make a positive difference in his community. His most impactful role is being the team lead for the group of young adults with autism at their farmers market booth on Saturdays from May to October.

"He's part of our Autism Training Center in our town where we train critical job skills to young adults with autism," Jennifer said. "He's naturally compassionate and has a unique perspective because of his autism. August is a great communicator and has an authentic way of building trust and friendships. He leads effortlessly - it's just a natural part of his personality. His role truly changes lives and allows other people with disabilities the chance to earn a paycheck"

Today, BeeFree Warrior Snacks has created many jobs for people within the autism community.. We are glad to support their mission and commitment to supporting those with disabilities.

Additional assets available online: Photos (3)

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