

Meet the teenage Frogtown entrepreneur building her own gourmet brownie business

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Food & Drink



Sheppheard (pictured here with her grandmother) graduated this spring at 17, and is already attending college while she builds the brownie business.

Yummy Brownies

Jerilyn Sheppheard was born with an entrepreneurial spirit.

In her youth, she organized everything from a neighborhood parade to an after-school program to a community garden. But when she decided, at age 15, to start a brownie stand in her Frogtown, St. Paul front yard, people were curious.

A lemonade stand, they expected. Delectable brownies covered in toppings, though? That was something different. And that's exactly what Jerilyn was banking on. Two years later, that little stand has grown into a gourmet brownie business called Yummy Brownies.

Jerilyn has been putting herself through a crash course in entrepreneurship for the last couple of years. She's clearly a smart cookie: She graduated from high school this spring at 17, and is now attending college in St. Paul, all while building her business. She's had no mentors, no angel investors, and no help from her family other than her older sister, Seanna, who's her chief taste tester and sometimes accountant. Her grandmother, Sallie, has been her biggest fan.

Her original marketing consisted of handing out printed flyers, but that wasn't quite enough. So like any child of the 2000s, she quickly turned to social media (Yummyum

Brownies on

Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/yummyum.brownies.3>).

and

Instagram

(https://www.instagram.com/yummyum_brownies/).

) to get the word out about her treats. And then people started showing up, and buying, and asking if she delivered. That's when the idea of catering was hatched.

As Jerilyn found herself baking more brownies and selling at farmers markets and events, she realized she would need some help, so she started hiring kids ages 11 to 17. She wanted to share her entrepreneurial vision with other youth, and show them that they can do big things, too. "Working with Jerilyn is wonderful," says Aidan Erickson, age 12. "I've learned proper service techniques, the importance of accurate orders, and food preparation. It feels amazing to be part of a team."

Her biggest event so far was July's Minnesota Orchestra Sommerfest. According to the vendor coordinator, Shemeka Bogan—an event planner and the project manager for Orchestra Hall Sommerfest—Jerilyn was actually short-staffed that day, and showed maturity and patience dealing with a large demand.

"She is very calm and collected even in the midst of chaos," Bogan says. "Great work effort and business model. She is determined to be successful and has proven it by her hard work."

Jerilyn hasn't stopped creating treats; she keeps expanding her product menu, and just started offering cake jars and homemade ice cream. Cookies may even be available in the future. Her goal is to have an actual brick-and-mortar store.

And her ambition has led to another big step for the brownie business: She's offering a [Youth Power Showcase](#)

(<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=339333256824435&set=a.101998037224626&type=3&theater>).

at the Hamline Midway Library Auditorium on October 20 from 2 to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$2. Come participate in activities, taste different Yumyum Brownie treats, watch live youth performances, engage in a Q&A with Jerilyn, and listen to youth staff share their experiences.

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