

'FLOUR GAL'

BLOSSOMS WITH ALUM'S GUIDANCE

[BY SANDY GRAHAM]

Twelve-year-old Lyla Padden opened her cupcake business, Flour Gal, just more than a year ago, and she already knows she's in the right field.

"Ever since I was little, I've loved to bake," says Lyla, a sixth-grader at Rocky Heights Middle School in Highlands Ranch, Colo. "I want to do this for the rest of my life."

Lyla launched her business by papering her school and suburban neighborhood with fliers she designed on a computer. Since her first sale last year to her teacher, the business has grown steadily. She offers about 20 kinds of cupcakes priced at \$15 to \$18 a dozen, depending on the flavor.

Even with strong support from her parents, Monica and Andrew, Lyla knew she could use a pro to help Flour Gal flourish. She was among the first students to enroll last fall in the John B. Trueblood E-Coaching Program through the Center for Innovation at Metropolitan State College of Denver. She was matched with mentor Robert Lanphier ('95, communications), owner of Pour Kids, a Denver-area restaurant group.

Lanphier jumped at the chance to become an e- (for entrepreneur) coach. "I've made pretty much every mistake in the book in my career," he says. "If I can't share that with someone, it's a wasted opportunity."

The e-coaching program is a collaboration among Metro State; Young Americans Center for Financial Education; John B. Trueblood, president of Trueblood Resources; and Denver-area entrepreneurs.

Trueblood, a longtime Metro State supporter, wants to encourage creative young people: "If they can have proper mentors or guides or coaches or whatever you want to call them, it may shorten the entrepreneurial learning curve," says Trueblood.

Mick Jackowski, director of the innovation center, decided to partner with Young Americans Center for Financial Education because of its existing program for entrepreneurs. The center sponsors a youth business competition that provides mentors to the winners in each age group. The Trueblood program matches mentors to other competitors.

In addition to Lanphier, three other Metro State graduates—Robert Algeo ('96, management); Pete Dascalos ('78, English); and Thomas Hoch ('92, technical communications)—participate in this program.

The mentoring pairs meet at least monthly from October through May. If young business owners complete the program, they receive \$150, thanks to Trueblood's contribution.



Lyla Padden and Robert Lanphier ('95, communications)

Lanphier and Lyla have concentrated on promoting Flour Gal and better analyzing business costs. In addition to monthly meetings, they talk every other week by phone.

Her profits go into an account for an iPad and college. She'd like to attend Princeton University.

"It's in New Jersey," she says. "That's where the Cake Boss (TLC celebrity baker Buddy Valastro) is from. He's my hero." ●

MAKE YOU HUNGRY FOR CUPCAKES?

Metro State grads Denon ('01) and Sean ('99) Moore own Cake Crumbs bakery and the wildly popular Denver Cupcake Truck. Support fellow grads and eat your cupcake, too!

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