



The Marion Chocolate Shop, Marion, IA

Ben and Katy Davis are the fifth owners of the Marion Chocolate Shop, a forty-year-old business with a reputation for success. Ben and Katy did not set out to buy a chocolate shop, but the opportunity arose and the couple is delighted that they took it.

Before owning the chocolate shop, Ben was working full-time for the National Guard, teaching military science at the University of Northern Iowa. But, Ben was given his next assignment in Davenport, an hour and a half drive away. Ben and Katy had no intention of moving, so Ben began preparing himself for a lengthy daily commute. Then, one Tuesday, Katy showed Ben that The Marion Chocolate Shop was for sale. He believes she showed him this as a joke, but by Thursday Ben was meeting with the realtor and Friday an offer was made.

Ben and Katy have made the chocolate shop their own. While they have kept the standard selection of items you would expect to see at a chocolate shop, like buttercreams and truffles, the couple is working on expanding their offerings. In August, the shop kicked off a flavor of the month. In August they featured a strawberry lemonade flavored cream, which was a mash-up of two flavors they already sold. In September, they did a back-to-school, peanut butter and jelly bonbon with a peanut butter filling and fruit gel on top. For the month of October, they did a pumpkin spice caramel, which Ben himself said was “pretty delicious.” The shop is also featuring some caramel apples in October, and by the end of the month, they will have made about 600 of them.

The couple is also looking to cater to their customer’s wants and is always asking for suggestions on what more they can offer. Ben hopes in the future they will offer custom flavors, custom colors, and even chocolate sculptures.

The business has only been operating under Ben and Katy’s ownership since July, yet the couple has already begun to give back to the Marion community. The couple is big on equity and equality and want the shop to be a safe and welcoming place for all of their customers. Ben has also been recently accepted as an ambassador of the Marion Chamber of Commerce where he will go to ribbon cuttings of new businesses and mentor new business owners in the community.

Ben suggests if you are looking to start your own business that you find mentors. He emphasizes the importance of finding people that will help you and give you advice. He has found this in a chocolatier down in Texas, as well as the head chef of a local restaurant. Ben and Katy also received mentorship from their SBDC counselors at the Kirkwood Center. Ben states that “Scott and Julie gave me the business foundation to know that we could do this. They were the first step to our success.”

America's SBDC Iowa is an outreach program of Iowa State University's Ivy College of Business and the Office of Economic Development and Industry Relations. Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity, 3410 Beardshear Hall, 515 Morrill Road, Ames, Iowa 50011, Tel. 515-294-7612, Hotline 515-294-1222, email eooffice@iastate.edu.

Funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, America's SBDC Iowa has 15 regional assistance centers located strategically across the state. Since program inception in 1981, the SBDC has helped Iowa businesses and entrepreneurs through no fee, confidential, customized, professional business counseling and practical, affordable training workshops.

For more information on America's SBDC Iowa programs or services, call (515) 294-2030 or visit www.iowasbdc.org or www.facebook.com/AmericasSBDCIowa.

Press Contacts:

Brianna Hall, America's SBDC Iowa, 515-294-4575, sdreyer@iastate.edu

Lisa Shimkat, America's SBDC Iowa, 515-294-2030, lshimkat@iastate.edu



Ben and Katy Davis
Owners of the Marion Chocolate Shop

###