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Teens turn fundraiser into gourmet business

BY KATIE GALLAGHER

LA QUINTA, Calif.—What started with an ambition to travel has led 16-year-olds Brandon Weimer and Leah Post to launch a toffee-making business.

Best friends since preschool, Weimer and Post were eager

to go on a freshman class trip to Italy in 2006, and were told by their parents they would have to pay for half of their travel expenses. Desperate for a



Brandini Toffee Co-founder Leah Post.

moneymaking idea to help fund the trip, the teenage duo used a family toffee recipe and a lifelong nickname for Weimer to create a business that is thriving more

than a year later under the name Brandini Toffee.

“We paid for both of our trips and had enough left over for spending money,” said Post. “We were surprised at how much business we were getting.” Friends and family were

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their first customers, and a basic Web site was set up for orders. When the trip was over, the demand for toffee continued. A formal consumer Web site was created at www.brandinitoffee.com, and Weimer and Post began selling their toffee at street fairs in Orange and Palm Desert last April. As business picked up, Brandini outgrew its small, rented kitchen and in November moved into its own commercial kitchen here equipped with 15 burners, two walk-

in refrigerators, a walk-in freezer and room for packaging. Three full-time employees staff the kitchen and Weimer and Post work after school. “We have lots of friends who want to help,” Post said.

The teenager’s parents helped them secure the kitchen and candy-making equipment.

“No order is too big now,” said Justin Post, Leah’s father, who helps with the financials. “The kids are saving for college now and when they go their younger siblings

will takeover where they left off.”

In January, Brandini Toffee exhibited at the Winter Fancy Food Show and introduced its toffee to retailers nationwide. Brandini Toffee is available in quarter-pound bags, 1- and 2-pound boxes and bite-sized pieces are available in half-pound mini tins. New to the lineup are Brandini Ice Cream Toppers, left over toffee crumbles that are recycled instead of thrown out. Custom packaging is also part of Brandini Toffee’s specialty. **GN**



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