**MICHIGAN BUSINESS**

Mel’s Toffee takes care of everyone with a sweet tooth

By Jane Peterson

All small businesses have a great story behind their success and Mel’s Toffee is no exception. What started out as a pretzel company back over a decade ago has really hit its stride with toffee over the past year.

Back in 2001, Michelle Williamson made five-layer pretzels for graduation parties, showers and holidays. Everything was done out of her home and made fresh to order. At the time her daughters were in preschool and she consid- ered going into the cottage industry, but the economy took a downturn and the plan was put on hold.

Meanwhile, a friend asked if she made toffee. That simple question was destined to forever change the direction of her emerg- ing company.

“I was curious to try it on my own. I found a recipe, tweaked it and it was instant success. I was sending the toffee with the kids to school. They made friends with their friends. Immediately it was kid ap- proved. Then, the Moms started calling - it was a hit,” she said.

What people may be sur- prised to know is that there is no Mel working for Mel’s Toffee. Mel’s is an acronym for Michelle and her family: M for Michelle and E and L for her daughters Erin and Lauren. It seems like a perfect fit for this family- owned business since Mi- chelle – who calls herself the Chief Toffee Officer – handles the majority of day-to-day operations her- self, but her husband and daughters, who are now in high school, lend a helping hand during events.

“As far as product line goes, I am mainly focused on toffee, new accounts, collaborations, developing new flavors and bringing new products to the market,” she said. “I have grown from one flavor to nine flavors in total. I ro- tate flavors through according to season or holiday. I can still do custom orders only upon request with am- ple lead time.”

Mel’s Toffee makes peo- ple happy and satisfies their sweet tooth.

“People love toffee pe- riod,” she said. “I feel my toffee has what people are looking for. My toffee has the perfect snap like a cold chocolate bar out of the fridge. Mine has the flavor that people are looking for. “Mine has the wow fac- tor that blows people away and keeps coming back for more. What makes mine unique is what I infuse my toffees with. It could be organic oils, fruit they can taste or the alco- hol I infuse my toffees with. It’s a win, win, win. Like my logo says, “One bite is never enough….ever!”

Williamson said this a great time to own a busi- ness in Michigan because it is a very diverse place to grow and is ever-changing.

“We have the rebirth of Detroit which opens lots of doors and brings endless opportunities to us all. The craft beer industry is grow- ing by the second sending people to both visit us and to become employed. And, there is the expansive list of farmers markets which give all small food busi- nesses opportunities to grow,” she said.

Williamson definitely has and is ready to con- tinue putting in the blood, sweat and tears necessary to develop a successful brand. No stranger to hard work, she paid half of her tuition all throughout high school at Royal Oak Shrine by working at Mc- Donalds. She went on to pay her way through college by working as a wait- ress, mainly in the Char- ley’s Crab restaurants. She graduated with from Cen- tral Michigan University with a B.S. in science with a concentration in corpo- rate health and a minor in marketing.

Mel’s Toffee continues to grow, Williamson said she will be hiring within the state and down the road may look at donating to a Michi- gan children’s charity.

“As her business contin-ues to grow, Williamson said she will be hiring within the state and down the road may look at donating to a Michigan children’s charity.

“Mine has the wow factor that blows people away and keeps them coming back for more.”

Michelle Williamson

“I feel the future is bright for Mel’s Toffee. Get your sunglasses ready. There are so many directions I can take with this company,” she said in an email. “Yes, I will wholesale to stores. But, the possibilities are endless. With a company like this, you have to be very creative and ready to move….all the time.”

Sea Salt Pretzel Toffee by Mel’s Toffee.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL’S TOFFEE