

Madeline O'Neill – Eau Claire Soap Factory

Background:

During the summer of 2017, I took a class and learned how to make homemade soap. I fell in love with all the scents and textures. So I started practicing and trying to learn as much as possible. Upon entering 6th grade, I learned about the Future US Entrepreneurs (FUSE) program at my school and it seemed like a perfect match. I could do something I love, share it with others and make money to do more throughout the FUSE program, I learned how to develop a business and financial plan and was able to grow more confident in my product and myself. The first year, I came in second place in the FUSE competition. The second year, I won. Next year I plan continue in the program by helping other students develop their business plan.

Overview:

Eau Claire Soap Factory is a business that sells bar soap, lotions and shower steamers with limited ingredients. Eau Claire Soap Factory offers 12 fragrances and a kid's product line. Each bar of soap is made with high quality ingredients and can be customized for skin sensitivities. Special occasion (e.g. holiday, birthday, bridal/baby shower) gift baskets are available upon request. Products can be purchased on the website (eauclairesoapfactory.com) using a credit card and products are shipped within a few days. When someone purchases 3 or more items, they receive a free loofah or soap dish. Products are marketed through the website, word of mouth, craft shows, school events, local magazines (VolumeOne, Chippewa Valley Fun), Facebook, and Instagram.

Personal Qualities:

My business succeeds because of my drive and passion to get things done and make it succeed. I demonstrate these qualities routinely by the time and effort I have (and continue) to put into my business. There have been many times where I've been awake until 1 or 2 in the morning trying to complete an order or prepping for an event. I follow up with customers to make sure they are pleased with my products and do my best to make sure they are satisfied. As previously stated, I came in second place in the FUSE challenge as a 6th grader and earned the Product Appeal Award. As a 7th grader, I won the FUSE challenge and was able to put the cash award back into my business and it's allowed me to improve my website. My most recent obstacle has been shipping products, as multiple orders have been damaged and even a few orders were stolen during the shipping process. I've started using sturdier boxes and a lot of packing material to keep things safer.

The Future:

In the future, I hope to expand my soaps and offer an organic line. While this would increase expenses, it would also increase sales, as many customers have asked for an organic product. I currently offer items made with essential oils, but the soap base is not entirely organic. I also hope to offer lotions and shower steamers for every fragrance. Currently, these items are only available in the most popular fragrances. At this time, I recruit friends and family to help me during the holiday seasons; otherwise, I've been able to keep up with orders.