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Business Comment

by Richard Jones
Farmer Jones

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Happiness and excitement led to magical venture

Susan Young, owner of Young's Auld Sweetie Shop, donated sweets to nurses, doctors, patients and children during lockdown

Small Business Focus
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Q How would you describe your business to a stranger?

A Young's Auld Sweetie Shop in Church Street is a wonderful mixture of Willy Wonka meets Harry Potter – magical. It's a business based on memories, creating new ones for the young and reliving them for the more mature.

It's a happy shop, full of smiles when people come in, a warm welcome from staff and space to browse. We have a large stock and supply all the old favourites – soor ploom, rhubarb and custard, pear drops, Coulter's candy to name just a few. We have a pick and mix with over 130 different varieties, handmade chocolate and fudge, and a large selection of Dutch licorice as well as diabetic, gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan sweets.

Q What inspired you to start the business?

A Many years ago, I walked into an old-fashioned sweet shop in England and I just loved the look, the smell and the memories it invoked of childhood visits to the corner shop. I saw the happiness and excitement on children's faces and was absolutely hooked. I wanted to open a shop where I was happy doing something I totally loved and believed in. Memories and making people happy are so important to me. One customer recently bought a selection of sweets and took them to her mother's care home where there were a number of dementia sufferers. She said their faces lit up as they remembered the different sweets laid out on plates for them.

Q How has your business developed?

A I first opened shops in the north of England



Susan Young is the owner of Young's Auld Sweetie Shop.

20 years ago, but my lifelong dream was to live in Scotland which I loved visiting.

I sold them and opened in Aviemore almost 10 years ago when I owned the Mr Simms traditional sweets franchise for Scotland.

I added my shop in Inverness in March 2019 and we were very busy when we opened – especially with cruise ships and bus tours. Many American visitors recognised us because an encounter in the shop was filmed and featured in a popular dating programme on US TV when a sour sweetie was too much for a contestant!

But when the pandemic hit we were not classed as essential and had to close. We had sell-by dates on our products. Instead of it going to waste, we drove carloads to hospitals at Raigmore, Elgin and Queen Elizabeth in Glasgow and donated them to the nurses, doctors, patients and children.

Q How are you moving forward post the Covid-19 pandemic?

A I pulled out of the franchise arrangement six months ago when the company was taken over. I became totally independent and rebranded my two shops under my own name while maintaining the quality and traditional

values – with a definite a Scottish flavour.

The Covid lockdowns were hard, but it's been hard for everybody. The loyalty of local people has kept us going. If people shop locally and support local businesses it makes a big difference.

Things are also looking up now the foreign tourists are returning.

Q What lessons have you learnt from your time in business?

A Always use quality products and make sure the surroundings are nice. But most importantly look after dedicated, hard-working staff because no business can run without them.

Q Can you tell us something interesting about yourself?

A When I was young I used to be a good dancer. Long before Strictly, there was a TV programme called Come Dancing which was very formal ballroom but always had a formation team dance.

Ten of us from our dance group in my home town Grimsby got an audition but didn't make the show. But we were definitely way ahead of our time with our modern routine to a Motown song. We would have 100 per cent got on Strictly – honest!

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