

IN

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Norwin

Sweet SPOT!

**McFeely's
Gourmet
Chocolate
in Irwin is a
Family Affair**



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Sweet SUCCESS

McFeely's Gourmet Chocolate
celebrates the season
in a delicious way.

BY JENNIFER BROZAK



Marion McFeely had been working as an X-ray technician when, after 20 years on the job, she was downsized. Faced with the idea of starting over, McFeely decided to pursue a much sweeter career path—one paved with chocolate.

McFeely had grown up with a mother who loved to bake and craft homemade chocolates. As a result, she developed a love for making her own specialty chocolates and had always dreamed of someday running her own business.

When she lost her job in the medical field, she decided the timing was finally right. In June 2013, she opened the doors to McFeely's Gourmet Chocolate on Fourth Street in Irwin.

"It was the scariest thing I've ever done," says McFeely. "I'd never done anything like this before. I went to talk to Lois Woleslagle at the Irwin Business & Professional Association to tell her I wanted to open up a chocolate and ice cream store, and she told me, 'You will always regret it if you don't try.'"

McFeely heeded Woleslagle's advice. She opened her shop during one of Irwin's summer street festivals and before long, the line to get into the store was spilling out onto the street.

"That first day was a bit overwhelming. The door didn't close the entire day. Thank goodness we had practiced scooping ice cream the week before," she says with a laugh. "We had an absolute ball."

McFeely, a North Huntingdon native and 1975 Norwin High School graduate, said that she knew she wanted to open her storefront in Irwin. "I know the people here, and I'm comfortable here," she explains. "I wanted to be a part of this business community."

After that hectic first day, McFeely soon settled into a routine. As word of mouth spread, her business began to thrive, and it wasn't long before she decided to add a second location. After a brief stay at Banco Business Park, she opened her second store at 100 S. Pennsylvania Avenue in Greensburg on Dec. 1, 2017. The new store gives her enough space to host chocolate parties for children, teens and adults, as well as work with community groups like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts for chocolate making workshops.

McFeely's also operates an ice cream trailer—a "store on wheels," she calls it—that the staff can take to weddings, parties and corporate and community events. In July of 2017, they added a novelty ice cream truck, complete with the unmistakable ice cream truck jingle, which zigzags through local neighborhoods.

McFeely's is a true family business—Marion's daughters and sister help make chocolate and run the two locations, and her husband, Ray, helps to operate the vehicles.

"I could work morning until night doing this," says McFeely, who has four children and nine grandchildren. "I absolutely love it. I lay awake at night and dream about what to make next. If you're going to open your own business, you have to have a passion for it, or it won't work."



Owner
Marion McFeely

"Yes, it's true that we give back to our community, but we get back **10 times** what we give."

Best sellers include the chocolate-covered bacon, sea salt chocolate caramels and the peanut butter meltaways. McFeely loves to experiment with combinations like chocolate-covered jalapeños and dark chocolate mixed with Pop Rocks.

Many of the items she carries have a seasonal theme. In the fall, she sells pumpkin truffles, caramel apples and "turkey legs" made with pretzel rods, caramel and nuts; during the holidays, she crafts 3-D sleighs filled with chocolate pieces. Hand-dipped fruits like strawberries, raspberries and tangerines are popular year-round, as is the fudge and, of course, the hand-dipped ice cream, which is supplied by Perry's Ice Cream. She welcomes special orders and can make customized chocolates for weddings, birthdays, graduations, corporate events and more.

McFeely is thankful to be a part of her local business community, and makes it a point to participate in nonprofit fundraisers and school events, always donating a portion of sales back to the organization.

"Yes, it's true that we give back to our community, but we get back 10 times what we give," she says. "I love to see our community grow, and we're happy to be a part of that." ■