

SCHOOLS

Afterschool program honors participants

BY HELEN WOLT
STAFF WRITER

The Good Neighbor Store afterschool program honored dozens of students for their participation during a recent awards ceremony.

Shop owners who participate in the initiative are also winners by gaining recognition in the community for their commitment to customers.

Teens who join the club earn community service hours while they learn about healthy eating and tobacco-free living.

Through their work with retailers, they gain knowledge about business and marketing.

"They are noticing how they are being marketed to and showing their siblings and their parents," said Teina Phillips, program director for Broward Regional

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MONDAY-FRIDAY 8AM-6PM

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BBX Capital acquires It'Sugar for \$57 million

BY MARCIA HEROUX
POUNDS
STAFF WRITER

BBX Capital has gobbled up another area confectioner — this time, the It'Sugar candy retail chain for \$57 million.

The Fort Lauderdale-based real estate investment and time-share company said June 19 it intends to add the Deerfield Beach candy retailer, which targets adults as much as children with its sweet treats, to its existing BBX Sweet Holdings division.

It'Sugar “fits pretty naturally,” said Jarett Levan, president of BBX Capital, referring to its Hoffman's Chocolates and Las Olas Confections holdings, a wholesale company.

“We love the industry. It's a \$34 billion industry with lots of room for growth,” he said.

BBX will support the continued expansion of the candy retail chain, already in 95 locations in 25 states and Washington,

D.C. Levan said It'Sugar recently opened a store on the Jersey Shore and plans to open another.

He said BBX would partner with It'Sugar founder and CEO Jeff Rubin to further expand the retail stores and “grow the brand in other channels.” Rubin will remain in his current executive position and retain a “meaningful interest” in the business, BBX Capital said.

“This brand is very special and the goal is to make it a billion dollar brand and global,” Rubin said. “We want to make It'Sugar a household name everywhere, not only South Florida.”

Rubin previously said Europe was a target for expansion. “They eat more sweets in Europe per capita than Americans do,” he said. But on Monday, Rubin said there are still plenty of opportunities in the U.S. to add before venturing abroad.

Over the past decade, Rubin built It'Sugar into a national retail chain.

The stores offer candy with a humorous twist including giant boxes of Nerds and Sour Patch Kids, and political and popular trends, such as “Schweddy Balls” from the infamous Saturday Night Live skit — made of rice crisps, chocolate and sprinkled with salt.

The son of a toy store operator, Rubin, 52, grew up working summers in retail. At school, he sold Bubble Yum to fellow students. Rubin said he went on to study economics at the University of Michigan and later received his MBA at University of Miami in 1989.

In 1996, he made his first foray into retail by working the candy counter in FAO Schwarz's Manhattan toy store. He helped launch Dylan's Candy Bar in 2001 with Dylan Lauren, the daughter of fashion designer Ralph Lauren.

On the strength of those experiences, Rubin and his wife, Allison, developed It'Sugar —

named to stand out as an irreverent candy company. In a time when many retailers focused on healthier eating and smaller portions, the Rubins offered outrageously big candy bars and boxes.

During the 12 months ended April 30, It'Sugar generated revenues of \$78.4 million. BBX's ownership represents 93 percent of It'Sugar's privately held stock.

BBX Sweet Capital Holdings' wholesale and retail business is expected to have revenues, following the acquisition, of \$110 million to \$115 million, the company said.

It'Sugar employs 50 people at its Deerfield Beach headquarters and 1,000 at stores nationwide, Rubin said.

In an interview last year, Rubin said he applied the brakes on store expansion plans in 2009, as tough economic times took hold. But candy turned out to be somewhat recession-proof, he said.

It'Sugar turned to private in-

vestors in 2007 and 2012, raising undisclosed amounts from Prentice Capital Management and, later, from Star Avenue Capital, the company said. Those funds helped the chain expand.

Mario Ciampi, partner in Prentice Capital Management in Greenwich, Conn., said last year that the firm invested in It'Sugar because it offers a consumer experience. The store chain is “fun, it's colorful, music is blasting. Who doesn't like candy?” Ciampi said.

Rubin said he and his wife decided to sell the business to BBX because they felt that “Jarett shared in the passion for the business. I knew he would be a great partner to grow this.”

And he added, “I found someone who has a bigger sweet tooth than me.”

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Health Planning Council's Partnerships Transforming Our Community's Health, or TOUCH.

“We're hearing back those stories of success and how students can be change agents in their own families and their communities,” Phillips added.

Students tour the stores and come up with recommendations for the grocers that will boost the availability and prominence of healthy choices. Factors they consider include placement, promotion, products and price.

Teens come up with suggestions such as putting healthier products near the front at eye level. Fill empty refrigeration space with produce. Provide shelf tags to identify foods as “Go, Slow or Whoa” eating categories.

Business owners

choose what will succeed in their operation, said Easton Harrison, a community health worker with the YMCA of South Florida.

“We're working with the stores, not telling them what to do,” Harrison said.

For completing the program, stores receive the Good Neighbor Store designation and recognition by local officials.

The Good Neighbor Store program has been a five-year journey, Phillips said. It's expanded into 13 schools located in low-income areas that have high rates of food insecurity and childhood obesity.

Dillard High School junior Jassamyn Joseph said the program taught her how to make better choices.

“I can go into stores and know from the packages if they're good for me,” Joseph said. “I cut down on Gatorade and



PICTURE PERFECT Teens in the Good Neighbor Store club celebrate at the end of the year awards ceremony. COURTESY

high fructose corn syrup.”

Program milestones this year include completion of an evidence-based curriculum which meets the educational requirements of the Children's Services Council. That will allow expansion into more public schools, Phillips said.

“We keep growing, keep engaging more people and keep touching more lives,” said Arely Lozano, a program director with the YMCA. “That's the beauty of this program.”

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Pompano Beach Fishing Pier, 222 N. Pompano Beach Blvd., Pompano Beach. pompanobeachfl.gov

Annual Fourth of July Celebration

This year's event begins with a Town parade at 10 a.m., beginning on Bougainville Drive, behind Town Hall, 4501 N. Ocean Drive, heading north to Pine Avenue, east to El Mar Drive, south to Hibiscus and then west to Bougainville before heading north and ending at Town Hall. There are also family activities in El Prado Park from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., including a waterslide and demonstrations by the Volunteer Fire Department. The fireworks display, at 9 p.m., will be shot off the beach north of El Prado Park. 10 a.m.-9 p.m. El Prado Park, 4500 El Mar Dr, Lauderdale-By-The-Sea. Free. 954-640-4209.

Fourth of July Spectacular

Live bands, a kids' zone, beach games, contests, family activities and a fireworks display. Free. Noon-9:30 p.m. Fort Lauderdale Beach, Las Olas Boulevard and A1A. fortlauderdale.gov

July Fourth Celebration

Family activities and refreshments on the beach, followed by a fireworks show. Noon-9 p.m. Main Beach Parking Lot, 149 SE 21st St., Deerfield Beach. Free. deerfield-beach.com

Deadline to receive calendar announcements is 14 days prior to publication. Announcements may be sent via mail to Community Calendar, Forum Publishing Group, 333 SW 12th Ave., Deerfield Beach, FL 33442, or via email to: communitycalendar@sun-sentinel.com.

ON THE SPOT

Will you volunteer this summer?



Yes, I want to volunteer at a nursing home or hospital. I'd also like to get a job.

JASSAMAYN JOSEPH



Yes, I work with kids' camps at the YMCA. At the Urban League, I clean up and help wherever they need it.

CLAUDIA LUBIN



Yes, I help at the YMCA and at my church. We put on fundraisers like car washes and barbecues.

DAANNA MEYER

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EASTON K. HARRISON
YMCA Community Health Worker

Do you volunteer regularly?

Yes, I am part of the Black Lives Matter and the Association for the Study of African American Life & History. From my past work with different organizations, I got a couple of hiring opportunities.

Where did it lead?

I started volunteering to do events and projects. It's a sacrifice, but after a while people noticed me. Now I am employed full-time at the YMCA office in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

What are your job duties?

I put on workshops in diabetes and chronic disease management and Matter of Balance classes. Also, I'm chairman of My Brother's Keeper Alliance. We provide mentors for youth in at-risk areas.

How are you making a difference in people's lives?

There are a couple of young people who look up to me and like to hang out with me. With the health initiatives, I see it. I do classes and people lose weight and increase their physical activity. When you see the change over time, you begin to realize your work is really powerful. It's actually pretty humbling.

What do you like best about your job?

Every day is something new and you meet new people. There are always obstacles and challenges that are unique, you overcome them and learn from them.



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