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IAICDV 2012 Scholarship Essay

What the Vending Business Means to Me

It all started several years ago on a trip to Utah. I was riding in the car when we spotted an Ice Cream Truck for sale on the side of the road. That started a trip's worth of conversation and several years of dreaming about what it would be like to vend ice cream in my hometown. We didn't buy that truck, but years later the dream became a reality and my mom started Buffalo Gal Ice Cream & Goodies. I work with my mom on the truck. My parents wanted to teach me about the value of small business, but the experience has become so much more.

Steamboat Springs is a destination ski area town about 180 miles northwest of Denver. We have about 10,000 year round residents. These locals are the ones that have showed me what a sense of community is all about.

Each evening when we go out to the neighborhoods to sell ice cream, we are embraced by the excitement and the joy that the Ice Cream truck brings. Children and adults jump and holler as we pull up. People gather in front of it when it stops, meeting new neighbors and conversing with old ones. Kids learn about the value of money and how to count it. Moms insist on pleases and thank-yous out of their children as they learn to order for themselves. There are lonely people who are happy that the truck has pulled them out of their trailer for a bit of conversation and a frozen treat. And if we don't show up on our scheduled night, our customers call us.

We hear about people's lives, we know their names. We bring back memories and make new ones. We have met a lady with a dying dog that likes vanilla ice cream, a gentleman who is going to beat cancer for the third time, we meet relatives from out of town, and we know who is allergic to dairy, wheat or red dye 40. There are the Hispanic kids who translate for their parents, the new babies, the ski bums and the construction workers at the truck. They bring the money in bags, jars, cups, banks and bongs, searching their cars for change, counting it out for us. They bless us and tell us how great we are for the town. Last season a man gave us \$40 so that we could buy ice cream for kids who did not have money. This year, the parents of some of those kids gave us money for the same purpose. Once during a torrential downpour, and we pulled over to wait it out. After a bit, two children we just vended to before the storm, came out to check on us to make sure we were okay. And I can't even begin to tell you how many dogs we've met that absolutely love us for our Frosty Paws.

Working on the truck has given me the opportunity to hug my community and get to know it so much better. But I think a young boy who saw us parked at our Farmer's Market put it best. He said, "Look mom! It's *our* Ice Cream Truck!" That's right Steamboat...it's *your* truck!