



Spreading Goodness

Commitment to community drives Jared's Jams.

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The Niemeyer family began renovating an 86-year-old building last year. That building in Edina would become the new home of Jared's Jams. As they began work on the stud walls, they invited community members to write notes of encouragement and scripture on them. When the family arrived back at the building the next Monday, they found that even the electricians on the job had joined in, writing scripture around the breaker box.



"The construction was definitely a community-supported and nurtured venture," says Brenda Niemeyer, mother of business owner Jared Niemeyer. "The well-wishers who would pop their heads in and couldn't wait to see the final product were really encouraging."

The new store has helped Jared's Jams to grow nationally while still staying popular in its home state.

The enthusiastic, dedicated following is thanks to two things: hand-crafted products, and the story behind them.

Jared's Jams began as an expression of gratitude. In 2014, Jared was invited by Special Olympics to speak at a United Nations conference for countries developing disability policies. He spoke about how inclusion had affected his life and was the only individual with an intellectual disability to present.

After his experience, Jared sought a way to give back to Special Olympics. "When I got back home, I told my parents 'I'm going to be making jellies to raise money,'" he says.

Jared began selling jams and jellies made with fruit grown on his family's farm. After two years of production and sales, he had raised \$6,000 for Special Olympics Missouri's new Jefferson City headquarters. That success prompted the Niemeyers to transition Jared's Jams into a small business.

When the Niemeyer family began receiving requests to ship out of state, which they were unable to fulfill due to homemade product restrictions, they decided to take the next steps in the business's growth. Brenda and

her husband, Dan, bought and renovated a building so Jared's business could have a storefront. Thanks to the new FDA-approved kitchen, Jared's products can now ship across the nation and be sold in stores.

As a small business, Jared's Jams has been able to join and receive support from the state's Buy Missouri program, which has promoted the business and offered the Niemeyers the opportunity to attend events like Buy Missouri Day at the state capitol. The Niemeyers have gotten to know Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, whose office runs the Buy Missouri program.

"Now we feel like he's not only a remarkable lieutenant governor, but he's a good friend, too," Brenda says. "He works diligently to help promote Missouri businesses."

Demand continues to grow for Jared's products, which have expanded to include fruit syrups, vanilla extract, and coffee blends that Jared's brother, Joshua, helped develop.

Brenda says it's particularly meaningful to be able to run the business in her children's hometown of Edina. She describes that small northeast Missouri community with its population of just over 1,000 as a wholesome environment—one that the Niemeyers are excited to be able to contribute to.

"We have a lot of communities in Missouri that have a lot of potential, but it's often difficult to get the things needed to develop," Brenda says. "If we can help bring any of those resources to our community to help it expand and grow, we would love for that to happen."

Importantly, growth hasn't changed the foundation of Jared's Jams. Though their supply needs have surpassed what they can grow on their farm, the Niemeyers continue to use their grandma's recipe for the small-batch jams and jellies that keep customers coming back for more. To them, that's what it's all about, and Jared says his favorite aspect of running the business is "to feel love for our customers, to appreciate them and do our part."

Stop by 106 N. Fourth Street in Edina or JaredsJams.com to discover more about the business and its products.



The Jared's Jams product line has expanded to include coffee and fruit syrups. Jared Niemeyer greets Governor Mike Parson while Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe looks on.

JARED'S JAMS. BUY MISSOURI