

OUR STATE MOTTO: SALUS POPULI SUPREMA LEX ESTO, "LET THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE BE THE SUPREME LAW."

Hope from Soap

A St. Louis company provides opportunities for disabled

STORY MICHAELA SATTERFIELD



Caption, caption caption, need names...



The lack of opportunities for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities after high school and the abundance of unhealthy skincare products in the United States are two issues close to sammysoap Managing Member Karen Copeland's heart. After years of contemplation, she came up with an unexpected solution to both issues: soap.

More specifically, the solution is an old fire-station-turned-storefront located in Kirkwood selling 100 percent natural soap hand-made in a factory at the back of the store that employs individuals with disabilities. The idea for sammysoap started brewing when Karen's son, Sam Shortal, graduated from high school. Sam, who has an intellectual disability, didn't have many options after graduating, Karen says.

"I thought there was a better way for individuals with disabilities to work," she says.

Sam says his favorite soap to make is the chocolate soap, which is made with cocoa butter and chocolate oil. As far as which tasks he enjoys doing at work, Sam isn't picky.

"I love to do everything," he says.

Karen says Sam has nicknames for everyone around town. Her friends refer to Sam as the "mayor of Kirkwood."

While there are training facilities and service providers that offer post-graduation opportunities for those with disabilities, sammysoap is different because it is not a service for these individuals at all—it is a for-profit business that sells products with intrinsic value. It also happens to create employment opportunities with wage equality for individuals with disabilities. The company

owners describe it as a "job creation machine" and promote that every bar of sammysoap is created with a greater purpose.

"Working with people with disabilities is the icing on the cake," Karen says. "It's a no-brainer. They're great workers."

Karen opened the store for business in November 2014 with Beth Forsee, her fellow managing member. During normal business hours, the factory where employees make the soap is open to the public; however, due to COVID, it is closed off to visitors until further notice.

The ingredient lists of sammysoap products are short and easy to understand. The ingredients are some of "Earth's most indulgent ingredients," Karen says. A few of them are hemp oil, rice oil, rose hip, and four different kinds of lavender. The company uses wildcrafted ingredients—ingredients grown naturally in the wild and then collected—whenever possible. The business often attracts individuals with skin conditions, Karen says, like acne, eczema, or rosacea, as they search for natural ingredients with which to address their skin issues.

"It's an opportunity to take all the different things I know how to do," Karen says, "and actually make a difference in the world."

For more information, visit SammySoap.com.