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Sugar Confections Bakery

'What this area needed'

By Kathryn Jacewicz, Staff writer

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SHALLOTTE—"This is what this area needed," local resident Mary Couvillon said while purchasing baked goods last week at Sugar Confections Bakery.



KATHRYN JACEWICZ

Sugar Confections Bakery owner Monique Holenko, center, waits on customer Mary Couvillon at the bakery last Wednesday. The bakery opened Sept. 2 and is open at 7 a.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

Employee Denise Ward said eight out of 10 customers say the same thing.

Sugar Confections Bakery opened its Main Street location on Sept. 2, but the baking has been going on much longer. Owner Monique Holenko began her business four years ago, as she turned a hobby into a home business.

After friends began asking her to make birthday cakes for their children, Holenko built up a customer base and remodeled her home kitchen into a state-approved kitchen fit for business, complete with three ovens.

Monique Holenko made more than 100 wedding cakes and 4,000 cookies a year, and was running a "by-order, full-time" bakery out of her home.

"We just outgrew that," she said.

When Holenko decided it was time to work beyond her home kitchen, she decided to open a storefront at 4830-3 Main St., at the intersection of N.C. 179.

"I think Shallotte is a great town. This is the little city of Brunswick County," she said. "I feel like this was the most ideal location. It's been a long time coming."

Fully believing in the business and location, Monique Holenko's husband, Alex Holenko, quit his job as a 25-year mechanic to help run the business.

"She's always had a great product," Alex Holenko said. "Everybody loves it, and it's because she puts the best products into it."

Monique Holenko and Alex Holenko's families helped turn the bakery into Monique Holenko's dream—an old-fashioned, ice cream and candy shop.

"What makes it more of a dream is that my family built this place," she said.

Within the first 12 days of being open for business, more than 1,000 customers had visited the bakery. Repeat customers were stopping by as much as twice a day, and more than 700 cookies were baked in two days.

"We feel really blessed," Monique Holenko said. "Our response has been amazing."

Monique Holenko credits the South Brunswick Islands Business Networking International for helping bring in customers, as the organization acts as a "business to business referral organization," she said.

"They are what took me from my home business to where we are now," she said.

Where she is now is a Main Street bakery that serves countless fresh breads, pastries, cupcakes, cookies and goodies five days a week.

"Her bread is out of this world. Her tarts are to die for. So delicious," customer Chris Walker said.

Open at 7 a.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, Holenko said baking takes place throughout the day.

"We try to have something new out every day," Monique Holenko said. "I have a love for food. If I don't like it, it's not on the shelves."

So far, customers are responding well to the New York-style breads, cakes and cupcakes.

"I want to have the local fare that the locals want," Monique Holenko said.

A local customer base is important, Monique Holenko said, noting she waited until tourist season ended to open Sugar Confections Bakery.

"Although we look like a specialty shop, we want our prices for the locals, we want our product to be for the locals," she said. "That's why

we waited to open until after tourist season, because we want to get comfortable with the locals and make sure we're doing right by them. We want to make sure we're a hometown shop."

Another added feature to the bakery is a multifunctional TV, which shows a DVD of specialty cakes that have been created for local clients and has the ability to switch to camera mode so customers can watch the cakes being created behind bakery doors.

Monique Holenko said popular TV shows have brought attention to custom cake making and allow the public to understand the amount of time that goes into each creation. Since opening on Sept. 2, Sugar Confections Bakery is booked for custom cake orders until November.

"We do out of the ordinary, and I think those cake shows make people excited," she said.

To open a Sugar Confections Bakery storefront was a dream. Now that it's become a reality, Monique Holenko feels it's her duty to pay it forward.

"Our goal for this was to do what we love and be able to bless the community and maybe help those that need some help," she said. "If it's about anything else, than the business is not successful. And I know not many people in business have that philosophy, but that's our philosophy."