

# New local business really takes the cake

By Toni Rocha  
For StatelineBusiness

ROCKFORD – Ask Marcia Puri what’s cooking, and her answer definitely will involve some pretty amazing cakes.

Backed by many years of baking for the love of it and perfecting her many creative interests, Puri started Centerpiece Cakes not just as a business but also as an outlet for intrinsic talents.

“I have a degree in education but I prefer creative businesses.” Puri said. “I’ve operated several small business based on my love for creativity. But when I saw a television special featuring a famous cake designer in New York, I told myself that’s what I should be doing. I’ve made hundreds of cakes for family and friends, and they’ve always told me how much they appreciate it, but you can only make so many before they start saying ‘whoa’ and comment on weight gain.”

Determined to open a custom cake business, Puri raised capital by substitute teaching for a year. Savvy about the cost of advertising, Puri found innovative ways to reach a growing customer base.

“I launched Centerpiece Cakes last year and it really took off,” Puri said. “Articles in local newspapers and regional magazine helped. The key is to become more visible as well as to be recognized as a unique business. And I’m happy that it is doing so well.”

In addition to writing articles for pertinent focused magazines such as Chicago Bride, Puri said she plans to gain nationwide recognition by participating in contests such as the Oklahoma State Sugar Arts Show, which will be broadcast on television.

Photos of her cakes will be featured in Wedding Cakes, a magazine distributed globally.

And she doesn’t hesitate when opportunity strikes.

“A friend and I were downtown Chicago looking for a business that might be interested in showcasing a cake,” Puri explained. “It was raining so we ducked into Water tower Place. Moda Italiana, a high-end leather handbag store, was having its grand opening, so I convinced the owner to let me make a leather briefcase as a promotional piece.”

The result was a life-sized briefcase so realistic that customers frequently mistake it for the real thing, Puri added.

“The exterior looks exactly like brown leather,” she said. “It’s complete with zippers and metal clasps.”

After taking a sculpture class at Beloit College, Puri realized that one of the creative talents lies in her ability to craft realistic detailed sculptures, a skill she applied to working with sugar.



Staff photo by Toni Rocha  
Marcia Puri, owner of Centerpiece Cakes, shows two of her creative designs, a cartoon car for children’s events and a rose-covered bouquet cake.