

- » **Growing Givers** Jewish Fund Teen Board makes hard decisions with \$50,000 in grant money to help Detroit youth. **See page 14.**
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Federation CEO Scott Kaufman talks with Teen Board members.

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Josh Charlip of Eskimo Jacks

Dessert Anyone?

Local company extends its reach into Busch's markets.

Ryan Fishman | Contributing Writer

Move over lox and cream cheese — ice cream sandwiches have become the perfect match for bagels, at least for 49-year-old Joshua Charlip.

The combination isn't necessarily part of a balanced breakfast, but for the Farmington Hills businessman, it's the next frontier for a family enterprise that started when Charlip was just 14.

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Historic Ruling

Local same-sex couples overjoyed by Supreme Court decision.

Ronelle Grier | Contributing Writer



Micki Grossman, her son, Ross, and his partner, Alan Ellias, at their commitment ceremony at Temple Israel in 2000. They married in New York in 2013.

It was a day for rainbows, proposals and celebrations as the long-awaited Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage was announced and the history-making news quickly spread.

As soon as the announcement was made on Friday morning, June 26, same-sex couples and gay rights supporters throughout Metro Detroit reacted with a mixture of astonishment and joy.

Farmington Hills couple Ross Grossman and Alan Ellias, who had a commitment ceremony at Temple Israel 15 years ago and were married in New York in 2013, reacted with similar jubilation.

"I'm still pretty numb," Ellias said. "It's really about being legally recognized; spiritually we've always felt married. It was the legal piece that was missing and all that comes with it — to not have to think about those things any more is profound."

Ross' mother, Micki Grossman, also of Farmington Hills, was thrilled with the Supreme Court decision. Unlike some of the ruling's detractors, who claim it diminishes the meaning of marriage, she believes allowing same-sex couples to marry will serve to strengthen the institution.

"It's wonderful that marriage has something so important that people are willing to fight for it," she said.

Beth Greenapple and Julia Pais, who were married in Canada in 2005 and celebrated their 20-year anniversary as a couple in March, are ecstatic their marriage is finally recognized in their home state of Michigan.

"We are delighted Michigan is now required to recognize us as a married couple," Greenapple said. "I can't tell you how elated I was when I heard the news; so is Julia, and so are all of our friends."

She received a call from the couple's 16-year-old son, Nadav, who was attending a journalism workshop in Washington, D.C., when the announcement was made. "He was so excited," she said.

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Dessert Anyone?

Local company extends its reach into Busch's supermarkets.

Ryan Fishman | Contributing Writer

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"When I was a kid I always worked bagels. It was something I knew how to do," he said. "I started baking at New York Bagel on Orchard Lake Road."

Then one day, while living between California and Alaska after graduating from the University of Michigan, Charlip got a call from his dad.

"He said the Bagel Factory was for sale, so I moved back home and bought the place," he said.

For Charlip, the shop at 12 Mile and Telegraph roads in Southfield was something special. Around since the 1970s, it was one of Detroit's original bagel shops and has been Charlip's professional focus for more than 20 years.

After expanding into Birmingham at the corner of Lincoln and Adams, he says he stumbled onto his latest business venture, Eskimo Jacks Artisan Cookies + Ice Cream, now being sold at Metro Detroit Busch's Fresh Food Markets. This adventure started with yet another momentous phone call.

"Someone told me about this famous ice cream sandwich shop on the UCLA campus in Westwood," he said, "so I flew out there to check it out and had this vision of opening a retail shop."

It wasn't long before Charlip and his business partner, wife Jill Sherman-Marx, started developing ice cream recipes.

"It started off as a hunch," he said. "I wish I could say we did scientific research, but I'm a seat-of-the-pants kind of guy. We were

already doing cookies at the Bagel Factory, so it seemed like a next logical step, and just took off."

The pair began with a cart for private events like bar mitzvahs and weddings.

"Nobody here was doing ice cream sandwiches, and we've got this passion not just for making the ice cream and the cookies, but also for the opportunity to build a business together, from the ground up," he said. "Eskimo Jacks is all us, where the bagel shop was something I bought, something that had been there."

"My plan was to build a brand with the events so people would recognize us naturally and then look for us in supermarkets or a brick-and-mortar location. The answer was right in front of our faces and has been unfolding naturally."

Growing Demand

Charlip says the cart business has grown 200 percent year over year, every year, and eventually he got a call from a local dairy company that was impressed with his product and wanted to help with supermarket distribution.

Eskimo Jacks is now available in 13 of Ann Arbor-headquartered Busch's supermarkets. Charlip expects they'll be in as many as 75 Metro Detroit markets by the end of the summer.

"We developed the packaging and flavors in three months, and the partnership with Busch's just came out of nowhere," he said. "We met with their buyer in January, and by April we were on the shelves and the

response from customers has been great. The West Bloomfield store keeps selling out, and they've had a tremendous response at all of their locations. In our current facility, we almost can't keep up with the demand."

Charlip and Sherman-Marx have been looking for a larger facility for several months and are



Josh Charlip outside of an Eskimo Jacks truck

working to finalize details as they prepare for the possibility of regional and national growth.

"We gave Busch's a 30-day exclusive, and as we grow this year, we'll assess how to continue moving forward. We have to be able to produce the product before we're overcommitted," he said.

On grocery store shelves today, you'll find Eskimo Jacks three-packs in five flavors, from the classic chocolate chip cookie with vanilla ice cream to more adventurous fare like a snicker doodle cookie with salted caramel ice cream.

The brand is named for the family dog, Jackson, a 70-pound Labradoodle.

"We started with a cartoon logo of our big, furry dog wearing a parka, but people thought it sort of looked like a dog treat, so we reworked the logo to make it a bit more appropriate for what we're doing. Jackson, however, is still consulted on all major business decisions."

Meanwhile, the Hillel Day School graduate is also growing the licensing end of his cart business to help with outreach in communities across the country to make the brand more familiar.

"My brother lives in Florida, and he was the first licensee of our cart business. He's down there booking events; he did 10 in his first month. Our goal is to license this business-in-a-box concept. We supply the trailer, the cart, marketing materials, dough balls and ice cream, and you can have a part-time business doing parties in your community," Charlip said.

The carts complement an ambitious vision for Charlip.

"We're building a brand locally, but my vision is to be the next Ben and Jerry's. These guys came out of nowhere to compete with Breyer's and Häagen-Dazs. They muscled

their way into the market with a great product, great marketing and a catchy label. That's my bench mark, and I believe there's room in the marketplace nationally for our product.

"The product is all-natural, and ice cream sandwiches are a childhood throwback for everyone," he said. "There's a story on every package of Eskimo Jacks. We take you back to the first bike ride of the summer; the smell in the air. We make you remember. That's the market and that's our appeal, and nobody else is doing a gourmet ice cream sandwich — but while it's gourmet, it's also classic and simple."

The product is also wholly organic, avoiding GMOs and is sourced from a dairy on the west side of the state. It uses fruits without preservatives and no corn syrup.

Charlip and Sherman-Marx are also working with Pure Michigan and the state's Department of Agriculture to break out, getting help with both promotion and growth, and placement in larger supermarkets like Kroger's and Meijer's that require certain levels of certification to add product to their shelves.

So how will Eskimo Jacks thrive as demand grows for calorie-conscious indulgences?

"We recommend cutting them in half," Charlip says with a laugh. "We're working on a gluten-free ice cream sandwich, but this is an indulgence. It's a dessert. You shouldn't skip it; we just recommend moderation."

"After all, it is a sandwich — you can have it for lunch." □

Find Eskimo Jacks at all Metro Detroit Busch's locations and order their ice cream sandwiches online at www.eskimojacks.com. To book Eskimo Jacks for your next event, call (248) 352-5695 or email info@eskimojacks.com.



Eskimo Jacks three-packs are available at Busch's.

Credit: XX XXXXXX