

Cookie business is booming for three Niagara Falls students

By PAUL WESTMOORE

NEWS NIAGARA BUREAU

NIAGARA FALLS — Three Niagara Falls High School students are making a lot of dough baking and selling cookies at school four afternoons a week.

As part of their entrepreneurial business class, Alex Matiash, Justin Bell and Heather Robbins opened the business — Chippindales — in early January. It took off instantly.

“The smell of baking cookies lures them to the concession stand like a cartoon mouse sleep-walking toward the smell of cheese,” said Joseph Bellonte, the teacher on special assignment who helps administer the entrepreneurial program along with business teacher Derek Zimmerman.

The shop is out of the way near the gyms and swimming pool. No signs advertise or direct people to the business. Yet students have found their way and lined up to buy three-packs of cookies.

Alex said the trio sells fresh-baked Otis Spunkmeyer cookies — chocolate chip and macadamia nut — from 3 to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

“We get 100 customers a day — at least. I’ve never had time to count them. There’s no time,” said Alex, whose main job is to manage the business and keep the books.

The partners divvy up their profits and earn a high school credit for participating in the entrepreneurial program.

“We’re making, roughly, a 70 percent profit after expenses,” Alex said, “but the problem is, we can’t make enough cookies to meet the demand.”

To try to remedy the situation, Justin said he and his partners are trying to get a second portable oven so they can bake more cookies at once. Currently, he said, Otis Spunkmeyer has let the business have free use of the oven in



Charles Lewis/Buffalo News

Alex Matiash serves up right-from-the-oven Chippindales cookies to fellow students at Niagara Falls High School.

exchange for buying the company’s ingredients.

The problem is that with just one oven you can only make so many cookies, Justin said, and each batch takes 20 minutes to cook and two minutes to cool.

Alex said that although he and his partners may only sell cookies from 3 to 4 p.m., they are hard at work during the last three or four periods of the school day.

“These cookies are really good,” school basketball star Paul A. Harris Jr. said while brandishing a Chippindale chocolate chip variety. “This is my 17th one today.”

Asked if it improved his shot, Harris said, “If you eat these cookies, you’ll be able to make three-pointers.”

e-mail: pwestmoore@buffnews.com