College entrepreneur grows new business with unique product

Posted on December 13, 2012 | Middlebury  business  Featured  local foods  Middlebury College
By Xian Chiang-Waren

SUZANNE CALHOUN TALKS with Rep. Harvey Smith at the recent Financing the Working Landscape conference in Middlebury.

MIDDLEBURY — They’re not jams because they’re savory, and they’re not quite chutneys because there is not much spice. So what exactly are the sauces that Suzanne Calhoun has been cooking up for the last eight months?

Calhoun, a Middlebury College student from Jericho, has developed a line of sauces called Suzanne’s Sweet Savories. Independent photo/Trent Campbell.

Now, using skills she developed in an entrepreneurship program at the college, she is trying to nurture her contribution to the local foods movement into a moneymaking business.

“I started experimenting with a mix between a salsa and a ketchup, because I wanted to preserve that really nice tomato flavor,” she said.

She started with tomatoes, but quickly expanded into apple, blueberry, carrot, cranberry, pear and rhubarb.

Calhoun’s sauces, as she describes them, are ones “that could go on a lot of different dishes, and add that really nice, garden-fresh flavor.”

Her versatile product can be used in many ways: as a glaze for meats (she recommends the apple variety for pork chops), on grilled cheese sandwiches (the blueberry is suggested), as veggie dips, or paired with local cheeses. Her website hosts a range of suggestions.

She spent her summer making the rounds at Vermont farmers’ markets to sell her wares, and currently has her product in nine stores.
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“She was a pleasure to work with,” Holmes said. “She is driven, creative and resourceful in the least. She has great connections with the movers and shakers of Vermont’s local food industry, a fact that led to expanding distribution into more stores. In the meantime, she is still soliciting interest.”

Now that farmers’ market season is over — and Calhoun is a full-time college student again — she is working on expanding distribution into more stores. In the meantime, she is still soliciting feedback and making connections with the movers and shakers of Vermont’s local food industry, a fact that doesn’t surprise Holmes in the least.

“She was a pleasure to work with,” Holmes said. “She is driven, creative and resourceful. She’s taken...
advantage of all the entrepreneurial opportunities in the college, in Addison County and even around the state of Vermont.

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