

Search

GO

Facebook | Twitter | Contact Us | Email Updates | RSS

EVANSTON ROUNDTABLE

COVERING WHAT MATTERS SINCE 1998 ... NOW NOT-FOR-PROFIT

CLICK HERE
Sign up
for our daily
newsletter.
We cover what matters...

**Support
Our
Journalism**
NOW NOT-FOR-PROFIT
DONATE NOW

Winter Mini Courses

A Creative Challenge for Students in 4th-12th Grade

Wearable Technology • Storytelling • Stop Motion Video
Surreal Compositing • Fun with Photoshop

Fully Online Starting in January



Home Donate City News COVID-19 Schools Art & Life Sports En Español Opinion All Recent Posts Public Square

A High School Senior's Success with a Sudsy Goat

By Wendi Kromash

Thursday, October 22, 2020 10:48 AM

A few weeks ago the manager at the *RoundTable* received an email asking if the paper might like to follow up on a story covered a couple of years earlier. The author of the letter, Alex O’Koon, currently a senior at Roycemore School, owns The Sudsy Goat Bath Co., a soapmaking company. Alex wrote in his letter, “I thought it might be interesting to write about how I’ve adapted during this time and how I’ve met the needs of customers during a pandemic.”

The letter was well written and proactive, and this writer was eager to meet a 17-year old successful entrepreneur who owned a company called The Sudsy Goat Bath Co. A Zoom interview was promptly scheduled.

Alex is unfailingly polite, thoughtful, bright, and expressive. How and why, one might wonder, did he start making soap?

“I’ve always been into using natural products because I do have sensitive skin and eczema. I was randomly looking online one day when I learned you can make your own soap, so that’s when I decided to actually make my own soap,” he said. It did not seem that difficult. He thought, “I can do this,” and so he did. He was 14 at the time.



Alex O’Koon makes all the products for his company, The Sudsy Goat Bath Co. RoundTable photo



EVANSTON
ROUNDTABLE
IS NOW NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Learn more about our
exciting plans for the future -
and how you can help.

TO VIEW UPCOMING
EVENTS ON THE
ROUNDTABLE
CALENDAR



CLICK HERE

CLICK
&
POST

SUBMIT AN EVENT
ON THE ROUNDTABLE
DIY CALENDAR

Donate to the
ROUNDTABLE today
and NewsMatch will
double your donation.

GIVE NOW

News
Match

Adventure
Awaits
at
avidor



FALL
INCENTIVES
THROUGH DEC 31, 2020



avidor
Evanston

CLICK FOR INFO

40
Shares

The initial batches were just for his family. They liked them. He kept up with his new hobby, but was intent on refining the initial recipe so that it looked, smelled, and felt better before and during use. He researched products using all natural ingredients. He kept tweaking his recipe, learning something new with each batch. He gave these soaps away to friends and family, and encouraged his samplers to give him feedback about what they liked and didn't like about the products.

After many rounds of product testing, he fine-tuned a soap recipe using goat milk. There are benefits to using a product made with goat milk. It is moisturizing and suitable for all skin types, yet gentle enough for people with sensitive skin and eczema. Comments from friends and family were extremely positive. In a marketplace filled with many handcrafted, small batch soaps, goat milk helped distinguish his handmade soaps.

About a year later, his older sister suggested that he try selling his soaps, saying if his family liked his soaps, other people would also. Alex came up with the name of The Sudsy Goat Bath Co. because people consistently told him his natural soaps were unexpectedly "very sudsy." Sudsy + goat milk = The Sudsy Goat Bath Co. Once he had a name, he needed a logo.

No problem. Alex drew the whimsical, smiling goat taking a very sudsy bath in a claw-foot bathtub that decorates his packaging. His business officially launched in June 2018; he was 15.

With his family's encouragement, he created a simple [website](#) for online ordering and payment via a credit card or PayPal.

Initially only soaps were offered, each carefully wrapped in brown craft paper and labeled. Alex convinced two boutiques in Chicago and one in Evanston to stock his soaps. He set up a table at outdoor markets like the Evanston Streets Alive Festival. Like any good entrepreneur, Alex was out there, promoting his products himself.

Initial online sales were slow, probably one or two orders a month. Undeterred, Alex continued to refine his recipe and test new scents. He developed a pumpkin spice soap for fall and a holiday soap that smells like peppermint candy canes. On a whim, he wrapped those soaps in bright orange paper and red and white striped paper, respectively. That proved to be a brilliant move. One of the store owners called to say that the soaps with the bright colored paper sold out within two hours; going forward, she only wanted soaps in brightly colored wrap.

Currently the website offers 10 different types of soaps, two different types of jojoba oil hand and body cream, lavender bath salts, and vanilla cinnamon sugar scrub.

The packaging is simple and attractive. Alex carefully wraps each bar of soap in bright, color-appropriate paper – purple for lavender soaps use purple wrap, orange for pumpkin spice bars, as examples – along with matching twine bows. It is a time-consuming process, but worth the effort.

Says Alex, "Although it takes a little extra time to hand tie each soap, customers have commented how they like how you can tell that care was put into each bar

LAW OFFICE OF

JEFFREY P. STORY, LLC

TRUST & ESTATE LAW, ELDER LAW
Special Needs
Planning & Trusts

TEL 847-328-7552 • FAX 847-332-0313

2144 ASHLAND AVE. • UNIT 2
EVANSTON, IL 60201

JSTORY@JEFFREYSTORY.COM • JEFFREYSTORY.COM

Our recent news app
is now available for iOS and Android!



• HANDYMAN SERVICES
• PAINTING SPECIALISTS
• REMODELING EXPERTS

REMODEL

REBUILD

DECORATE

REPAIR

THE FIX IT COMPANY
100% WOMAN OWNED

• 847-869-8918
cell: 847-274-5193

• www.thefixitcompany.com
• linda@thefixitcompany.com

SINCE 1987

COLLABORATIVE
PRENUPTIAL
FAMILY
DIVORCE
MEDIATION

**Brigitte
Schmidt
Bell, P.C.**

847-733-0933

EVANSTON & CHICAGO

Lawyers@bsbpc.com | BrigitteBell.com
BrigitteSchmidtBellPC

ETHS GIFT DRIVE

SIGN UP TO BUY OR DONATE A GIFT BY DEC 11
bit.ly/EvanstonGiftDrive2020

DONATE: Clothing & Winter Wear
Backpacks & Suitcases
Journals & Puzzles
Sports Equipment
Toys & Games
Rice & Pasta
Toiletries
Gift Cards

SPONSORED BY THE ETHS COMMUNITY SERVICE CLUB
ethscommunityservice@eths.k12.il.us

He produces everything at home, printing business cards, product tags, and product labels at home on the family printer. If there is a little backlog, he might enlist his mother or his younger sister to help, but for the most part, he is running the business himself. He especially appreciates his mother's help going to the post office for him to mail packages.

Alex is very protective of each product's recipe; each one takes months to develop and involves lots of testing, research, and more testing. The goat milk soap recipe took about two years of constant refinement, in part based on customer feedback, which he welcomes.

He fills orders in the evenings with a solid inventory built up during the shutdown and again this past summer. It was a smart decision to stock up. In April, as the virus was surging, his sales started to increase. People were panicking about not being able to purchase soap. Once they found the site online, they told their friends and soon the orders started arriving, pinging his phone in rapid succession. Alex saw his sales explode, and by the end of April he had shipped more than 1,000 bars of soap along with other products like salts and creams. The orders have come in from all over the United States. One of his best customers lives in Alaska.

This boom in sales came without any outside advertising. The Sudsy Goat Bath Co. has a [Facebook](#) page and an [Instagram](#) account, but so far positive word of mouth is the company's only form of promotion. April's sales were the exception; since then Alex has been fulfilling at least 30 orders per month, while sales continue to trend upward.

Making soap is a very exacting process; ingredients have to be carefully measured and weighed. Alex is very familiar with recipes, having begun baking at age 4 with this grandmother.

He has always loved baking and now works part-time at a local bakery, a job he took to help him be certain he was making the right career decision to pursue baking as a profession.

It was: Alex applied and was accepted to the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., widely considered to be "the world's premier culinary college."

The plan is that he will be off to New York next summer, pandemic notwithstanding.

Once Alex enrolls in college, the fate of The Sudsy Goat Bath Co. remains to be seen. Until then, Alex will be busy finishing his senior year, working at the bakery, and continuing to make and ship soaps, creams, and bath salts that can make anyone feel and smell great.