

A LOVING GESTURE BECOMES A HIP RETAIL PRODUCT

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CITYSCAPE

Valerie Jennings just wanted her boyfriend to eat a little healthier.

So the “aspiring home chef” whipped up some wholesome homemade granola in their Lenexa home to replace a national cereal brand boyfriend Joe Parrish often snacked on.

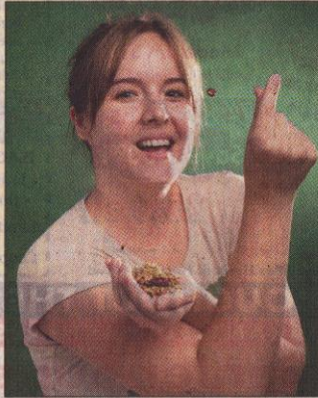
In less than a year the granola, now called Hippy Chow, has gone from a loving gesture to a retail

product that will be sold in national gourmet specialty chain Dean & DeLuca.

“When you set out to start a business, you hope you will have success like this, but to have it and have it so quickly is amazing,” said Jennings, in a ponytail and Hippy Chow T-shirt.

Jennings was honing her cooking skills through cookbooks, food blogs and books on the food industry when she began to worry about artificial ingredients and mass-produced foods. Parrish not only snacked on her granola but shared it with co-workers. Soon they were placing orders, along with family and friends.

Jennings, 28, an MBA student at Rockhurst Uni-



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versity, also was working full time as an asset manager on commercial mortgage defaults with Midland

Loan Services in Overland Park. She took a less stressful 9-to-5 job as an operational accountant there

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and began devoting more time to Hippy Chow. A professor helped with a business plan last fall, and this May she introduced the granola product at the Overland Park Farmers Market and Foo’s Fabulous Frozen Custard.

She runs the business out of her Lenexa home but makes the granola once a week at a kitchen on the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Lawrence. Hippy Chow is a member of the Simply Kansas program sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce. The designation certifies that at least 75 percent of Hippy Chow’s ingredients or production comes from Kansas.

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HIPPIE CHOW: Dean & DeLuca will sell it

FROM A12

Jennings launched a website at www.hippiechowgranola.com, a Facebook page, a Twitter account and a monthly e-newsletter. She even hired a graphic artist to do the packaging.

"People at the Farmers Market look at the packaging and think it is something I am buying at the store and reselling," she said. "It has given us a level of professionalism maybe above and beyond what our size would suggest. Certainly that was critical with Dean & DeLuca that we already had the packaging and the brand in place."

That connection came through an Overland Park Chamber of Commerce luncheon when a fellow foodie connected her with the manager of the Leawood Dean & DeLuca.

Josh Hodapp, general manager of the store, said he looks for products that are new, interesting and exclusive.

"It shouldn't be 'Oh, this is good enough for my store.' This is an awesome product for all the Dean & DeLuca stores," he said. "I loved the packaging, loved the product."

Quick bites

■ Firehouse Subs plans to open two more area locations: 4628-4630 J.C. Nichols Parkway in mid-October,

and 7521 W. 119th St. in Overland Park in November.

■ The new Westport Cafe & Bar is now serving brunch from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Menu items include eggs Norwegian, eggs Benedict and eggs Florentine served on the restaurant's house-made English muffins. One complimentary brunch type drink — bellini, mimosa, bloody Mary, coffee or soft drink — will be included. Its other specialty cocktails also will be available. Westport Cafe & Bar is at 419 Westport Road.

■ Kansas City-based PB&J Restaurants Inc. plans to open a seafood restaurant, Newport Grill, in Wichita in mid-November. It also has one of its YaYa's restaurant concepts there in the Bradley Fair shopping center.

■ Fazoli's, a quick-service Italian chain, has selected Kansas City as one of two cities nationwide for major expansion. The company currently operates six area restaurants. It is not only remodeling those stores, but it is changing the service style so meals are delivered to the tables with plates, silverware and glassware. The other city targeted for expansion is St. Louis.

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HEALTH INSPECTIONS

The Kansas Department of Agriculture has cited the following restaurants for six or more critical violations:

■ Hen House Market, 15000 W. 87th St., Lenexa, had seven critical violations during an Aug. 6 routine inspection. They included fried fish, chicken tenders, corn dogs, cottage cheese, mock crab and other foods at improper temperatures (discarded) and bologna and Canadian bacon dated for consumption by July 31 (discarded). "We sent 500 employees through a food safety sanitation class, so they all got certified. We do it about every three years," said David Ball, president of Balls Food Stores.

■ Pegah's Family Restaurant, 11005 Johnson Drive, Shawnee, had eight critical violations during an Aug. 6 inspection following a complaint. They included an open container of raw hamburger above open containers of fruit, and cooked liver, tuna and chicken salad at improper temperatures. "We threw all that food away," said manager Sara Bahmani. "This is the first time we had that problem, and our freezer was broken and the repairman came the same day to fix it."

■ Tanner's Bar & Grill, 12906 W. 87th St., Lenexa, had nine critical violations during a July 30 routine inspection. They included moldy diced tomatoes in the walk-in cooler (discarded), and cooked chicken, cooked peppers, hot dogs, cooked beef and other foods held at improper temperatures. "Our cooler broke the night before. It was an unfortunate incident in timing," said general manager Steve Senecal.

Food service operations inspected by the Environmental Health Division of the Jackson County Public Works Department with three or more critical violations:

■ Legend of Asia, 1853 S.W. Missouri 7, Blue Springs, had three critical violations during an Aug. 12 routine inspection. They included meats kept at improper temperatures (discarded) and cans of pesticide stored on a shelf above food (pesticides moved to proper location). A restaurant spokesman said the pesticide was only used on the outside trash bins and is now stored in a storage area, and the meat cooler is now maintaining the correct temperature.