

# WOMAN-OWNED FAMILY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

## TEENY FOODS CORP.

Portland, OR



Minerva and Sam Teeny



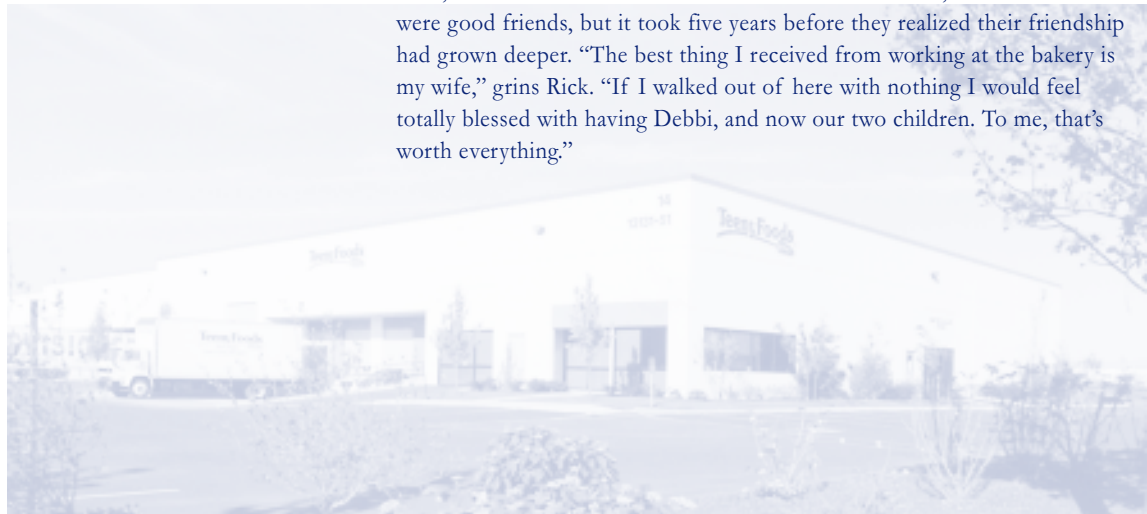
The Teeny Foods story may have started with pocket bread, but it really began with a pocket full of miracles. Created by determined parents, the bakery was primarily a means to support a family. It also instilled a strong work ethic in their five children and brought a wife to a son. A lot has changed since then, including the name and ownership of the business. No matter which Teeny owns the company, Debbi and Rick Teeny insist that they are merely the caretakers and attribute their growth to answers brought by prayer.

Rick's parents, Sam and Minerva Teeny prayed for a new direction when they were forced to close their Teeny Department Stores in 1963 because of fierce competition from the newly opened malls. Shortly after closing the stores, Sam went hunting with friends and took along Minerva's delicious Lebanese pita bread. His hunting buddies raved about the bread and urged Sam to open a bakery. Sam modified the recipe, named it "Pocket Bread," and the idea of Middle East Bakeries was born.

Having been approved for a loan, Sam went to the bank to pick up the check. He took the banker some sample bags of the bread. The banker saw that there was a Bible verse on the bags of bread. He told Sam that if he wanted the loan he would have to take the verses off the bag as they might offend some customers. Sam was a very determined man, and he told the banker to keep his money because he was not going to change the bag.

Middle East Bakeries, Inc. opened in 1964. Because Pocket Bread had not been commercially produced before, Sam had to invent, develop, and manufacture much of his own equipment to produce the specialized product. The family, including all five Teeny children and many other dedicated relatives, worked very hard to introduce Pocket Bread to the marketplace. Even as a 6-year-old, Rick scrubbed floors and cleaned toilets in the plant.

Sam met Debbi Carson at a Young Life group he was leading at Gresham High School. He offered her a job when she graduated and, in 1980, Debbi came to work in the business. As co-workers, Debbi and Rick were good friends, but it took five years before they realized their friendship had grown deeper. "The best thing I received from working at the bakery is my wife," grins Rick. "If I walked out of here with nothing I would feel totally blessed with having Debbi, and now our two children. To me, that's worth everything."



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Middle East Bakeries was sold several times within the family. It was difficult for Sam to let go of his “baby” when sons Parry and Rick made the final buyout. They commemorated the sale and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the business with a surprise party and, to honor their parents, changed the name to Teeny Foods Corp. Several years later, Rick and Debbi bought Parry out and moved the company to its current 24,000 square feet, nearly eight times the size of the original location.

Today, the Teenys listen to, and heed, the wisdom of their advisory board. They increased their product line to include pizza crusts and became a woman-owned company. “Our customers have been thrilled we did that,” says Debbi. “It helps them diversify their vendors and it opened up new opportunities to us.” Because they are married, the business was already half Debbi’s; now she is the majority owner by a small percent.

Two years ago, the Teenys acted on another piece of board advice. They hired a nonfamily general manager to lead the company in new directions and to give them more time with their children. “We need people who have larger perspectives, ideas, gifts and talents that we don’t have in our own family,” says Debbi. “Bringing on Darrell was a smart, strategic move for the company,” adds Rick. The business finished up its best year as far as total sales, and each month breaks the previous month’s records. They are gearing up once again for what Rick calls a “BHAG: a big hairy auspicious goal” to add new production lines.

The Teenys know that employees can make or break a business. “Our employees are everything to us,” says Rick. “There is only so much we can do ourselves, and the people working here have become family to us.” Everyone works together as

a family, pulls together in crunch times, and shares in the benefits with bonuses. “They’re very faithful,” smiles Debbi.

Sons Daniel, 13, and Isaiah, 10, haven’t had to work in the business as young as Rick did, but they have grown up with it. They came to the workplace as babies and now often do their homework on the conference table after school. This summer, Daniel began working in the plant packaging pizza crusts. “I liked stacking the boxes the best,” says Daniel.

More than income, the bakery’s success provides the Teenys with opportunities to serve their faith through humanitarian efforts. They

take time out of the company’s daily routine to help charities, youth organizations, and people in need by coordinating distribution of food donations from their network of food processors.

Sam and Minerva’s values and vision for Middle East Bakeries are the same today under Debbi and Rick’s Teeny Foods Corp. “We honor God in what we do and try to make a difference in the lives of others in the process,” says Debbi. “We want to support our family and all the other families who are involved in the bakery.” For the Teenys, that means keeping the Bible verse on the Pocket Bread. After all, “Good things come in Teeny packages.”●

## TEENY FOODS CORPORATION IS HONORED FOR

- ❖ Its innovative founder who had to invent, develop and manufacture much of the equipment for the company’s original product—pocket bread.
- ❖ Having the determination to put Bible verses on bags of bread, even though it meant scrambling for resources and low-cost equipment when a bank loan was denied.
- ❖ Strategic moves that included acquisitions, new products, professional management, results-focused ownership, and expansion.
- ❖ The company’s ability to produce six times the dollar volume of 20 years ago with 25 fewer employees.
- ❖ Recognizing that family business instills an incredible work ethic, as well as responsibility, commitment, and perseverance.
- ❖ Loving parents, who teach their children to have vision, to be productive, and to make a difference in the world around them.