

Local Family Opens Ben & Jerry's

May 17, 2018, Big Bear Lake, Calif. – Things just got a lot cooler in the Big Bear Lake Village. Ben & Jerry's opened its doors April 4, and father-daughter team Tim and Carissa Wolcott couldn't be more excited to serve the community they love.

Best known for his cutting-edge photography and love of the great outdoors, Tim has been a Big Bear name since 1994. He was a pioneer in creating the first "green" printing process free of heavy metals and chemicals, and art gallery, the Gallery of American Landscaping. A senior in high school, Carissa already knows the entrepreneurial ropes and is looking forward to her college education.

The Wolcott family history is seasoned with bakers and grocers, Tim's own father owning a local Big Bear bakery, Something Special, until 2004. But his dad also had a dream of opening an ice creamery, which got Tim thinking. It wouldn't be long before he and his daughter took the reins on their newest business venture.

The business model was simple. The Wolcotts wanted to bring a brand to Big Bear that was trusted and "real." Ben & Jerry's seemed the only option after interviewing countless other brands, especially with their fair-trade policies and dedication to healthier ingredients. All Ben & Jerry's products are non-GMO with no artificial flavors or colors. Established in Vermont, the brand also has a California dairy for easier access and guaranteed fresh delivery.

Tim and Carissa signed the lease at The Village Shops in November 2017, and immediately began construction. Appreciating the history of the 100-year-old building, the Wolcotts maintained the beams originally cut at historic Pederson Mill from Ponderosa Pine and recycled everything they could right down to the existing moldings. Commercial kitchen and freezer space was added to accommodate plenty of stock, with three new freezers coming soon. The entire endeavor was assisted by Tim's father and funded by Tim's great grandfather's prized coin collection, making Ben & Jerry's Big Bear a five-generational effort.

Ben & Jerry's Big Bear features 32 unique flavors of ice cream and sorbet. There are even gluten free, vegan and nut allergy-friendly varieties. Staff create each delicious cone and edible bowl from fresh ingredients on custom waffle irons each morning, hand-dipping them in chocolate and candy adornments. Customers can enjoy a pre-packaged pint or select from the case for a custom-packed pint of their choosing. Don't forget to order ice cream cakes for all your major parties and events with any combination of your favorite flavors, including upcoming graduation.

Speaking of events, Tim and Carissa recently acquired an additional 1,000 square feet to the rear of the parlor to be a party room. Tim has special interest in providing fundraising opportunities for youth sports, school projects and more through Bear Backers of Big Bear Valley and the National Park Foundation. In addition, Ben & Jerry's is a new field trip destination for Bear Valley Unified School District.

Ben & Jerry's is at 652 Pine Knot Ave., Big Bear Lake, inside the Village Shops. For more information, to order a cake or to book an event, call 909-366-0474, or visit the website www.iluvbigbear.com. Follow Ben & Jerry's on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/benandjerrysbigbear/>.

- *Stephanie Thoth*