



Jennifer Torres & The Candy Store

By DIANE SMITH

When Jennifer Torres was a kid, she LOVED candy – couldn't get enough of it, even though her mother tried to curb the amount she ate. Now, the 27-year-old can indulge herself as much as she wants because she owns and manages The Candy Store on Main Street.

Growing up in Tiburon, Jennifer went through all the Reed District schools. As a young teen, she always volunteered to be inside the bear costume for the library's Teddy Bear Tea. Then she grew too tall to fit into the costume.

The Strawberry resident says she enjoys working with children. While in grade school, she volunteered at the library's arts and crafts

workshops for children and then helped the teen librarian in the homework lounge. In high school, she babysat and worked as a part-time nanny.

As a 17-year-old Redwood High School student, Klaus Meinberg hired her. The former candy store owner says Jennifer's fluent Spanish was a plus, and when he called the library for references and was told they hated to see her go, he says, "That was good enough for me!"

After she graduated from high school in 2009, she went to Dominican University as a psychology major but, two years later, she left to go to the College of Marin for a business major and computer science minor.

During the weekday afternoons, she worked at the Belvedere Tiburon Child Care Center but, on weekends, she was also learning the candy trade from Klaus and his wife, Linda. This included learning how to make Klaus' homemade fudge and caramel apples plus the tricks to making waffle cones.

"You can't make the cones if it's humid," she says. "They don't get crispy." She says, as a teen, she really got into the candy mode. "I used to dye my hair to match various candies in the store," she says.

Four years ago, she began working fulltime at the preschool while going to night school. A year later, she became manager of the Candy Store and, when she heard rumors that it might be for sale, thought long and hard about buying it.

When the Meinbergs went off on vacation for a month, Jennifer got a taste of what it was like to be on her own. “I learned that it’s important to watch your bottom line,” she says, “because every single penny comes from hard work – you have to earn it.”

In 2015, after being in the candy business for 18 years, the Meinbergs were ready to sell, and Jennifer had made up her mind to buy the store. “We sold it to Jennifer because we felt she was the right person,” Klaus says. “Other people just wanted to be investors, but she was going to be the owner-operator.”

“I want this store to have the traditional, old-time candy store, mom-and-pop feeling,” Jennifer says. “I always ask for samples before I buy something new. I want to know what I’m getting.” She and her staff - Lyn Honda, Sarena Berg, Lucy Berry and Natalie Winger - taste everything first.

“Some things are tasty but don’t look good,” she says. “I don’t buy them if they’re messy or crumbly or if the package doesn’t look enticing.”

The Candy Store carries myriad kinds of candy either separately or in bulk, and it can be chosen by color, theme or era. It also has stuffed animals, children's books and giant Pez dispensers. There's even a five-pound gummy bear. And, The Candy Store ships for customers – handy if you have a college student who misses the old hometown.

Now that she's the owner, it could be said that Jennifer Torres is a *real-life* "kid in a candy store."

The Candy Store on Main Street

7 Main Street

Hours are Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

maincandystore.com

Phone: 415-435-0434.