

High school inventor taking pumpkin spray to local stores

By JOAN DEMIRJIAN | Posted: Monday, October 26, 2015 6:45 am

Family and friends of Sawyer Zak of Bainbridge have long predicted that he is a future entrepreneur. That prediction is already coming to fruition for the 14-year-old University School freshman.

Sawyer had been working on an idea that has developed into a product now being marketed in a variety of local marketplaces for the fall season

He invented Pumpkin Potion, which is trademarked.

Pumpkin Potion is an all-natural preservative that is sprayed on the inside of the carved pumpkin to help preserve it through the season.

Frank Cangemi Jr., of Miles Farmers Market in Solon, one of the places the product is being sold, said Sawyer came in, all dressed up, and pitched the product. “I was so impressed. You don’t see kids like that. He’s going to be a big success,” Mr. Cangemi said of Sawyer’s future.

Sawyer has been developing his Pumpkin Potion since last fall.

“I had to find different ingredients and I tested them,” Sawyer said, explaining the effort that went into researching the product. He tried different ingredients and food preservatives. “I finally came up with a solution that worked, and I continued testing. It’s not just a cheap product,” he said.

When sprayed on the inside of the carved pumpkin, the preservative prevents mold and keeps the creation fresh, allowing families to enjoy their carved pumpkins up to four times longer than an untreated pumpkin, Sawyer noted.

Even now, he is still testing it on pumpkins. It is sold in a plastic spray bottle which was designed by a



Sawyer Zak with his grandmother Susan Zak and his brother Oliver

Sawyer Zak, 14, to the right, with his grandmother Susan Zak and his brother Oliver stand outside Breezewood Garden Center in bainbridge with a display of his invention, Pumpkin Potion. It is an all-natural solution that preserves carved pumpkins for a onger time than untreated gourds.

local graphic designer.

His product is being sold for \$4.99 per bottle at places where pumpkins are sold, greenhouses and online at www.pumpkinpotion.com. Proceeds benefit local food banks.

He has spread out marketplaces so they are in a wide area, on the east and west sides of Cleveland, he noted. He has been promoting the product through his recently launched company Seasonal Designs LLC.

The high school freshman credits his invention to his involvement with the University School Entrepreneur Club where he said he received a lot of help from his teacher Greg Malkin. Sawyer introduced the preservative concept during the Entrepreneur Club Challenge.

He is learning about building the business and growing it more next year, he said, when he plans to market the spray to larger stores in 2016.

Bill Patterson, who owns Patterson Fruit Farm in Chester said he was impressed with Sawyer's Pumpkin Potion and agreed to sell it in his farm market.

"I think it's a neat product and needed," Mr. Patterson added. "It has nice packaging and is very professional."

Mr. Malkin said at University School's Young Entrepreneur Institute, "We believe that every student should understand and experience entrepreneurship. These experiences help students develop grit, confidence and other critical life skills.

"It is hard to believe but Sawyer is a veteran entrepreneur even though he is only in the ninth grade," Mr. Malkin said. "He participated all three years in our middle school club and was a standout at our springtime Young Entrepreneur Markets," he said.

"Now that he is in high school, he can become involved in our many business activities including several classes, a business plan competition, summer apprenticeships, investment committees and much more. He can even major in entrepreneurship through the Anderson Scholar program," Mr. Malkin said.

The Young Entrepreneur Institute also works to strengthen the regional youth entrepreneurship ecosystem, he said. "We offer professional development for teachers, like our upcoming Enspire 2015 conference." Daymond John, one of the sharks from the Shark Tank program will be the keynote speaker, according to Mr. Malkin.

Sawyer's mom Heather Zak said her son has always been an entrepreneur. She recalled how he cut wine bottles in half and made them into fish tanks called Soy Cycle for last year's entrepreneur club.

He is doing all the sales and marketing himself and he does the demonstrations, she said. He set up a booth at Patterson's Farm and Breezewood Garden Center and people stopped by and he talked about the product.

“We are so proud of him.” Mrs. Zak said.

Locally, Sawyer’s Pumpkin Potion is available at Patterson Fruit Farm in Chester, Miles Farmers Market in Solon, Lowes Greenhouse in Bainbridge, Eddy’s Fruit Farm in Chester and Breezewood Gardens and Gifts in Bainbridge.