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# Good will sweetens Mt. Kisco shop

BARBARA LIVINGSTON NACKMAN

## Bakery has donated \$108,000 to charity since its 2005 opening

Thousands of cookies and hundreds of frosted cakes have helped Connie's Bakery & General Store in Mount Kisco fund music education for special-needs children, replace windows for needy families and more.

The store, tucked in a walkway off South Moger Avenue, sells sweets and handmade items from earrings and soaps to jams and baskets. Profits beyond costs and 20 staff salaries are earmarked for local charities in an unusual business model blending a bakery with charitable giving.

"We put a smile on people's faces and make life sweeter for others," said Deena Plotka, who runs the shop. "I worry that people don't we're here in this alleyway. The more we sell, the more we can give."

The store opened in 2005 and after paying expenses has given out \$108,000.

Store founder Connie Milstein is a lawyer, Manhattan real estate executive and philanthropist.

Through its Foundation Sweet

Success, six nonprofits are selected each year and have included the Career Closet in Briarcliff Manor, the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley and Friends of Karen in Purdys.

Two years ago, the Family Resource Center of Peekskill got help to replace windows in two houses for homeless families.

Executive Director Elizabeth McCovey linked the grant to a Christmas gift. "I was scrambling to make the houses suitable for families," she said.

This year the Music Conservatory of Westchester in White Plains got support for lessons and recitals for special needs students, said Development Director Chris Meyer.

"Here this was a local community foundation, and they could see the impact of its funding. It was outstanding, and we had some bakery goods at the reception too," she added.

The bakery also provides several apprenticeships.

Stephen Pugh of Mt. Kisco has been making batter in the steel-countered kitchen for nearly a year.

"It's a good place to work and a good place to be," he said showing off



Chef Simeon Manber, left, and pastry apprentice Stephen Pugh hold a tray of cookies August 24 at Connie's Bakery & General Store in Mount Kisco. Connie's gives 100 percent of proceeds from the sale of baked goods to charity through its Foundation Sweet Success, and six nonprofits are selected each year. *Joe Larese / The Journal News*

finely decorated cookies.

All Baking is directed by Simeon Manber, a Valhalla High School graduate who went on to the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. He has worked at Mario Batali's Babbo restaurant and in the Trustees Dining Room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"Before Restaurants I worked in Social Services so this is like a dream come true," he said of the blending of his skills and interests. "We hire people who have had

***My Kids love the variety of cookies, and I like the idea of the shop."***

Cambria Russell,  
devoted customer

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trouble finding sustainable employment," he said. "We make profits to make money for charities."

He places a strong emphasis on fine quality ingredients like Belgian Chocolate

and different kinds of vanilla for flavoring.

Cambria Russell of Mount Kisco is a devoted customer.

My Kids love the variety of cookies," she said, "and I like the idea of the shop."

Beyond Brownies, cupcakes and flourless items, there are cakes for special events, like 20,000 brownies for President Barack Obama's inauguration. And keeping it local, Chappaqua residents Bill and Hillary Clinton have visited and tasted.

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**IF YOU GO**

Connie's Bakery & General Store is at 41 S. Moger Ave., Mount Kisco, and online at [www.connies.org](http://www.connies.org). It is open from 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Saturday.

This year's recipients: Blythedale Children's Hospital, Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County, Meals on Wheels of White Plains, Music Conservatory of Westchester and Westchester Women's Resource Center of Putnam/Northern Westchester.