

Town Made builds presence as South County food incubator

By [Jacquelyn Voghel](#) - 01/23/2023



RACHAEL LAPORTE, director of food operations at Town Made LLC, prepares food at the recently opened commercial kitchen in the Wakefield section of South Kingstown. / COURTESY TOWN MADE LLC

SOUTH KINGSTOWN – For small food producers, locally sourced ingredients can often be financially out of reach.

Town Made commercial kitchen space, which opened last May, is hoping to change that through a newly launched Agriculture and Culinary Trades for Innovation and Opportunity Now (A.C.T.I.O.N) scholarship program.

Town Made last week announced the launch of the federally-funded program, which gives food entrepreneurs free access to Town Made's commercial kitchen space and other resources if they source, or will commit to sourcing, most of their ingredients locally.

"We're trying to shift that financial paradigm around," said Ken Procaccianti, CEO and founder of Town Made. "It can sometimes be so much cheaper to buy produce in bulk from (big-box) outlets, and we're

trying to say, maybe if you invest a little more in the local market, we can offset that by offering free commercial kitchen time.”

This arrangement works out to a cost-neutral alternative for scholarship recipients, Procaccianti said, while giving a financial boost to local suppliers.

In October, Town Made was one of 96 organizations nationwide to receive a Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which awarded the Wakefield commercial kitchen \$482,070 toward the A.C.T.I.O.N. program.

In accordance with the USDA’s requirements, Town Made contributed \$120,442 in matching funds.

The idea for the scholarship draws from Procaccianti’s own business experience. With his wife, Christina Procaccianti, Ken co-founded Green Line Apothecary, which sells homemade ice cream at the pharmacy’s soda fountain.

“Being makers ourselves, we learned how difficult it was to source local products to go into that ice cream ... It takes work and is more expensive than going to the store or ordering something online,” Ken Procaccianti said.

“But that investment goes back to the community, and it creates goodwill for our business ... so we wanted to multiply that,” he continued. “We want to enable other makers, other chefs, other community groups to also source their products locally.”

Town Made also surveyed local farmers and entrepreneurs to develop the program, said food and beverage director Rachael LaPorte.

“Consistently, the answer was, we need a commercial kitchen, we need it to be low-cost, and we also need a bit of equipment in there,” LaPorte said.

In addition to kitchen space, Town Made also offers storage, storefront access and other business resources such as marketing assistance.

Since launching in May, Town Made has attracted 10 members, some of whom have already been accepted into the A.C.T.I.O.N. program, including 401 Garlic Sauce and South County Herbals.

For 401 Garlic Sauce, the program will allow not just more locally sourced garlic in their signature products, but the production of new offerings such as barbecue and hot sauce using local vegetables, co-owners Carrie and Ted Sherman said in a statement.

And for South County Herbals, the program “will help support the next steps in the growth of South County Herbals by removing barriers that will allow me to focus on my business,” said farmer and owner Krystal Carpenter.

As the business continues to grow, Procaccianti and LaPorte hope to bring the scholarship program to another 20-30 food entrepreneurs.

The scholarship program is open to a range of food producers, including farmers, meal prep companies, school and community groups and chefs.

Participating entrepreneurs must locally source at least 51% of their food ingredients in products made at Town Made. Producers do not need to meet this requirement to apply, but must be willing to take this step if selected.

If a producer does not already source most ingredients locally, Town Made will assist them in connecting with local resources.

Those interested can apply on the Town Made [website](#). Town Made will continue to accept applications until funding has been exhausted.

Jacquelyn Voghel is a PBN staff writer. You may reach her at Voghel@PBN.com.