



## **SCORE column: Son inspires mom's business**

Diane Gustin is the kind of mother that inspires you to be better. She is an entrepreneur on the verge of great success, but the thing she values most is using her business to help her son, Drew, and others with special needs. As the owner of Heart at Work Unlimited LLC, Gustin is making a great product and providing meaningful employment for people with disabilities.

With flavors like cheese pizza, cinnamon bun, and caramel chocolate drizzle, Gustin is making high-quality gourmet popcorn that is gluten free. As the business develops, other gluten-free snacks will be added.

"When my husband and I sold our business about five years ago, I knew that the next thing I wanted to do would involve people with special needs," Gustin said. "I wanted to have another employment option for Drew. That makes my vision personal — to provide meaningful employment for people with disabilities by providing a line of gluten-free snack foods."

She decided on gluten free because Drew has celiac disease, but she emphasized that the products are for everyone and have a superior taste.

"There's nothing like it," she says.

Originally started at the Farm Kitchen in Algoma, Gustin now operates out of the Brown County Culinary Kitchen within Curative Rehab. The new location provides access to the population she wants to hire. Drew helps every step of the way — popping, hauling, measuring ingredients and cleaning up. Others from Curative do similar jobs and help with packaging.

Gustin feels fortunate to have them.

"These young adults are such good workers; they put their hearts into everything they do," she said. "Drew has poor verbal skills but can work way beyond that. He is

so much fun to be with, and from a selfish standpoint, I just want to hang out with him."

The name, Heart at Work, was selected because she says that special needs people have hearts of gold. Drew had open heart surgery when he was younger, and Gustin said she just had to have a gold heart in her logo.

The product has received raves, and Gustin is refining her business plan and looking toward the future where the product is readily available in retail locations, and as corporate gifts. She is planning on attending industry trade shows and is developing a website.

**Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of DB Commercial Real Estate in Green Bay and assistant district director for SCORE, Wisconsin.**