

How a 13-year-old ended up on the cover of Entrepreneur



Bobby Flay. Venus Williams. Chip and Joanna Gaines. What do they all have in common? They've graced the cover of Entrepreneur magazine. And, for its September issue on "Young Millionaires," 13-year-old Alina Morse joins their illustrious ranks. Morse is the founder of Zolli, an all-natural candy line that includes drops, taffy, and pops, all developed to be healthier for teeth and kids. The line is expected to generate \$6 million at retail this year, in outlets such as Amazon, Kroger, Walmart and Whole Foods. Here's how she got there.

MKR: What inspired you to launch your brand at just nine years old?

AM: I was fascinated by business, loved candy, and I was tired of hearing "No, it's too much sugar!" from my parents. I set out to make candy for myself and friends, and to make my mom's life easier. During my research, I discovered that tooth decay was the single greatest epidemic facing kids and families. I wanted to change this, and helping more kids and families smile became my passion.

Why was it important to you that your products be natural?

I wanted to make something that everyone could enjoy. Many of my friends had allergies or intolerances to certain ingredients, such as nuts, gluten, dairy, or in my case artificial colors. Using natural ingredients made meeting these requirements easier and allowed us to create something that everyone could enjoy at home, in school or even when traveling.

What are some milestones you've met along the way?

Over the last three-plus years, we have grown from zero to over \$6 million estimated at retail, and are the number one healthy candy company. We are proud to be redefining and energizing candy sales for retailers. So many amazing events have helped us grow and share our mission, including appearing on Good Morning America when I was 10, being the only candy at the White House Easter Egg Roll two years in a row, appearing on Steve Harvey, and being the youngest person to ever appear on the cover of Entrepreneur. Distribution has expanded from Whole Foods Markets to Amazon, Kroger, and earlier this year, Walmart stores nationally, as well as international distribution in Asia and Europe. And we are just getting started!

What is your message to other young entrepreneurs in the natural arena?

My advice to other young entrepreneurs is to ask questions, write your ideas down, build a great team that believes in the mission, remember you are amazing and you will do amazing things if you put your mind to it. And always work hard, try, believe and never give up!