

## More Than Ice Cream

In the heart of Wisconsin — a state known for its rich farmland, tight-knit communities, and world-famous dairy — warm summers bring people outside and back to their roots. Growing up in Appleton, Wisconsin, I remember wanting to hear the anticipation of hearing the cheerful jingle of an ice cream truck echoing through our street. But in the summer of 2017, as my family prepared for the new school year, my dad casually asked my siblings and me, “Did the ice cream truck ever come around this year?” When we said no, he looked thoughtful. A few days later, that simple question became something much bigger — an idea that would soon shape our family, our summer routines, and our connection to the community.

That fall, my parents made a bold decision: we would become the neighborhood ice cream truck. This felt like the perfect mix of fun and purpose. By the next summer, we launched our business, Ice Cold Emergency — a retired ambulance that we had to remodel to make it serviceable plus mobile. I was 10 years old at the time, and I didn’t fully understand the impact this venture would have. Looking back now, it’s clear that our little truck became much more than a novelty. It became a lesson in entrepreneurship, a tool for community building, and a tribute to Wisconsin’s proud dairy heritage!

Starting the business wasn’t easy. At first, we parked the truck in neighborhood parks and at small events. Sales were slow, and we were still figuring things out — from managing inventory to maintaining the freezer. But slowly, we built a following. Families started recognizing our truck. Kids would wave from the sidewalks. Local event organizers began calling us to participate in block parties and school events. We realized we weren’t just selling ice cream; we were offering joy, comfort, and nostalgia — all packed into a cone. With my

parents' background in business and marketing, they taught us not only how to serve ice cream but also how to run a business with purpose. Our mission was simple but powerful: to serve fun, fast, and affordable treats — all under five dollars — while creating joyful experiences for the community. At just 10 years old, I didn't realize the impact this business would have — not just on our customers, but on me. From the start, my parents involved my siblings and me in the day-to-day operations. I learned how to greet customers with a smile, how to count change, and how to make sure the freezer was always stocked. My dad always said, "In business, every day is math in real life — dollars and cents count." From the beginning, my parents treated this business as both a family bonding experience and an educational opportunity. The values we practiced inside the truck extended to the streets we served. My parents also believed in giving back to the community that supported us. We often donated a portion of our earnings and tips to the animal shelters or local fire departments. Over time, I've realized how much *Ice Cold Emergency*, our family business, represents what's great about Wisconsin: local roots, hard work, family connection, and community care. The look on a child's face when they choose their favorite flavor, or the nostalgia in an adult's smile when they hear the truck music — those are the moments that remind me we're doing something special. Whether we were parked at a playground or hired for a big corporate event, the joy we brought to customers became the highlight of my summer days. More importantly, the ice cream truck became a classroom. From customer service to financial management and inventory tracking, I was learning real-life skills most kids don't experience until much later.

Over the years, the truck evolved. We upgraded equipment, expanded our menu, and began offering custom packages for private events. But what never changed was the experience: the laughter of kids, the conversations with neighbors, and the look of surprise on someone's

face when they find their favorite flavor. These are the moments that remind me how much this truck means — not just to our family, but to the people we serve. Looking back, growing up in a family business gave me a head start on lessons most people don't learn until much later. I realized our business was growing, and so did I. I've gained real-world experience in customer service, financial planning, and marketing — all before finishing high school. My parents' determination, creativity, and love for what they do have taught me what success looks like — not just in dollars, but in impact. What started as my dad's spontaneous idea has grown into a tradition that we share with our entire community. Our truck may be small, but it carries with it big lessons: about entrepreneurship, resilience, and the value of serving others. But beyond the numbers and logistics, I learned the value of hard work, consistency, and community spirit. I saw firsthand how a small family business could bring people together — whether it was kids calling my dad "the ice cream man" with excitement or old friends reconnecting while waiting in line.

Today, our truck isn't just a vendor or a side business, it's a symbol of hometown pride. It's a tradition we've built over time. In small towns across Wisconsin, Ice Cold Emergency has become part of summer memories. With trial and error and lots of ice cream, our family business became a sense of community, kids have a fun ice cream truck to remember, and parents get a sense of nostalgia. The truck honors both our family values and our state's proud dairy tradition!

