

OXFORD BANK SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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Every local business has a story worth sharing with the community. That is the belief behind Oxford Bank's "Business Spotlight" series – to shine spotlight on all of our favorite local businesses and connect businesses with their surrounding communities.

This month's spotlight is Lucky's Natural Foods.

AW: What inspired you to start your business?

Tanya: My mom and dad were from here originally and moved to California to begin a family. In 1974, they moved back to Michigan and worked to open the business. My father and grandfather had always worked in produce, so it only seemed fitting to open a produce shop. Lake Orion felt like the perfect location.



I've always worked with my dad in the business, beginning when I was eleven years old. I remember our first day; I went with my dad to the Eastern Market at three in the morning and purchased cherries. We sold them out of our truck on the corner of M-24 and Clarkston Road, by Buckhorn Lake, and my mom brought us tuna fish sandwiches for lunch that day. It's a great memory I have with my parents and how we started out. Soon, my dad was ready to open a permanent location. He decided to purchase our building from my grandfather, and opened Lucky's Produce, Plants, and Flowers. What began as a produce shop gradually evolved into a health food store, and later the name was changed to Lucky's Natural Foods.

I had always taken an interest in working in the store, so when my dad was ready to retire, I decided to buy the business and building from him. It was 1993, and I had my own kids then. I would bring my kids here to work with me, just like when I came with my dad. They would be behind the counter in their playpen, or sitting in a high chair in the store; people would come by to just see the babies. Today, we have four generations that have been part of this business. My daughter, Andrea, works here alongside me now, and we have her children here with us, so it truly is a "family business."



AW: What products/services do you sell?

Tanya: We have everything from vitamins, herbs, and homeopathic remedies, to all natural and organic groceries, to aromatherapy...the list goes on. We sell some vegetarian-friendly options, a lot of gluten-free products, and quite a bit of Amish meats and poultry. I love selling fresh Amish turkeys at Thanksgiving; it's nostalgic with decorating the building and having tons of people in the store. We may see people we don't see all year round that just come in to get their holiday turkey. I love our customers and our community. We have always tried to listen to our customers and bring them what they want. Over the years, we have grown and our product selection has adapted to our customers' needs.



AW: What's the one thing your business is known for, over your competitors? Why are you known for that?

Tanya: Our focus on customer service is something that sets us apart. We really take the time to talk to our customers and to help them find what they need. If it's something we don't have in stock, we even special order items. Big box stores can't do that; they don't always have the time or the education to be able to help customers with their specific needs. We want to always strive to offer that to our customers.

AW: What has been your business' proudest moment? Why?

Tanya: I had a customer with brain cancer come in, and I was able to help him. Seeing the impact that I could make on one person made an impact on my life, too. He thanked me and said that because of me, he survived. All I did was help him, like I would with any one of my customers that comes in. I did what I know to do. We talked, we researched different topics and symptoms in our books, he bought different supplements and so forth, and I helped him. It's the best moment of my career so far.

AW: What has been the biggest risk you ever took for your business? What was it, what could have gone wrong, and what was the end result?

Tanya: Putting my whole life into this business has been a risk, but also has been the best reward. Even during the recession, we did well. Our customers kept coming in during that time because we were able to keep them healthy and keep them from going to the doctor when they didn't have insurance. This business has been my life since I was eleven. Being self-employed has its freedoms, but it can be a risk. It's not something you take for granted, and it has given me the best of life and I have enjoyed every day that I've been here.

AW: Tell us something interesting/fun about your business.

Tanya: We have been here, in our original location, since 1974. We have had three working generations and our children here; we are a true family business, which you rarely see anymore. We have updated the building some, but there are a lot of memories and nostalgia in this building that we have been able to preserve while we grow and change with the times. We put in a penny tile floor with all 1974 pennies to represent when it all started. The letters on the front of our counter are the original wood with the paint on them from the front of the building, and the wood floors and barrel roof are all original.

AW: What's your favorite product that you sell?

Tanya: I love Holy Basil—it's just an amazing product that brings you a calm peace of mind. Frankincense is great for pain internally and externally, and I also love Slippery Elm because it's great for sore throats. Our hair dye is really great, too—it's all natural and permanent without the harsh chemicals. I love the salt lamps and aromatherapy diffusers too! We have something for everyone here!

Note from the owner: Stop by and see us today! We are still in our original location in the downtown historic district of Lake Orion. You'll find us on the corner of Broadway and Front Streets in the recently renovated building we've been in since 1974. We are proud to say that we have a long history here in our hometown of Lake Orion! A big thank you to our customers for allowing us to serve you in this community for over 43 years. We hope there are many more to come!



Lucky's Natural Foods

101 S Broadway St, Lake Orion, MI

M-Thurs, 10am-7pm | F-Sat, 10am-6pm | Sundays-Closed