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It's No Trick: Physician's Chocolate Shop is a Treat

Craving some double-dipped chocolate malt balls? Or perhaps you would like to taste a French truffle or a cup of creamy cocoa? Whatever your fix is, chances are it can be satiated at Blue Frog Chocolates, a gourmet confectionery owned by Richard H. Streiffer, M.D., chair of family and community medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine and his wife, Ann.

The Streiffers opened the chocolate shop in August 2000, after years of wanting to start a retail business. For Streiffer, this desire stemmed from a childhood of helping his merchant father.

"I grew up in my father's store. I was there every Saturday and in the summers. Owning a business was in my blood," he said.

The couple settled on chocolate after seeing a friend's success in the industry in nearby Baton Rouge. Ann runs the shop fulltime, whereas Streiffer works there on weekends and holidays. He also does the accounting and advertising at home after work.

"The business is really about pleasure and happiness. It is so enjoyable to watch people get excited about chocolate. Usually people are indecisive because they want everything, but they are just having fun shopping around," Streiffer said.

The ability to foster happiness was very important after Hurricane Katrina, said Streiffer. Relatively unscathed from the hurricane, Blue Frog was closed down for two months, but business was strong when the store reopened in late October 2005.

"People needed such a break from the attitude here. Everyone was so stressed out," said Streiffer. "This was one of the few places where people could walk in to and escape from their problems."

Although treating disease and dishing up pralines do not seem so similar, Streiffer said being able to market a product is important in both fields.

"With patients I am often 'selling' them on a treatment option or why they should consider a certain test. A lot of these skills I have as a patient educator translate into being a good salesperson."

—By Elissa Fuchs



Richard H. Streiffer, M.D., pours melted chocolate into candy molds at his Blue Frog Chocolates shop in New Orleans.