

Steven McCartney:

Owner of Yum Ices

By Kerry Murtha

When Steven McCartney returned home from a two-year teaching stint in the Far East, his professional life took an unconventional turn.

“We were still dealing with this pandemic when I got back and I was basically starting my life from scratch in terms of finding new housing and choosing my next move,” he said.

The enterprising educator decided the time was right to fulfill a long-awaited passion that he put on a back burner in order to pursue his teaching career abroad.

In June, the Far Rockaway resident was ready to put his new business idea to the test. He parked his Yum Ices truck—a Dodge Ram he retrofitted before he left for Asia in 2018—outside the boardwalk entrance at Beach 108th Street. By the end of the first day, he realized the potential for a successful summer selling Italian ices from his commercial vehicle.

McCartney now has a regular roster of customers that include beachgoers, nearby residents and throngs of ferry riders who pass his truck on their daily trek to the shore. On average, the vendor said he sells around 250 ices a day. It’s a simple concept that’s paid off for the entrepreneur. “I’m not processing anything so I didn’t have to invest in machinery,” said McCartney. Instead, he stocks canisters of the frozen treat—a sweet mixture of water, sugar and chunks of fruit—that he buys directly from the Lemon Ice King of Corona, a Queens institution that’s defined the perfect Italian ice for more than 75 years.

McCartney first launched his Yum Ices line in 2016, when he subcontracted a brick and mortar concession counter alongside the DredSurfer Grill on the boardwalk at Beach 17th Street. “I had my 10-by-10 section but I had a vision to create more of a themed brand,” said

McCartney. “I knew a truck would give me the flexibility to do that and make it easier when transporting my inventory.

“There were a lot of twists and turns to get to this point but here I am,” he added, “God works in mysterious ways.”

Yum Ices was a mobile vendor at the REMA4US annual business fair in August and at the National Night Out Against Crime event last month, where McCartney distributed 1600 ices. “It was a win-win in that it gave visibility to my truck while providing a service to the neighborhood.”

McCartney has been an active member of the Rockaway community for more than a decade. In 2007, the former physical education teacher at Frederick Douglas High School helped create the Rockaway Walks Fitness program, a 10-week outdoor exercise regiment he co-sponsored with elected officials.

He later began writing the Rockaway Walks Fitness column for The Wave, where he offers advice on everything from workout tips to the importance of vitamins. In 2015, he compiled his articles into a fitness book for children entitled “Physical Literacy 12 Steps Pledge Ambassadorship.” The publication has since been translated into Spanish and Mandarin, a nod to his accomplishments teaching teens in China, where he created new sports programs for high school students.

Proceeds from Yum Ices now help fund McCartney’s nonprofit organization, Healthy Lifestyle Changes, which he created to support his ongoing fitness initiatives on the peninsula.

McCartney’s contract with Riis Park Bazaar comes to an end on October 31st, but the new vendor plans to return to Beach 108th Street next summer. He hopes to extend his brand in the off-season to include Yum Ices merchandise and eventually wants to create a seating area next to his truck that includes an overhang canopy.



Today Steven McCartney sells Lemon Ice King scoops from his vending truck at the entrance of the Beach 108th Street boardwalk.



Steven McCartney launched his Yum Ices line in 2016 as a boardwalk concession on Beach 17th Street.



In 2015, then City Councilman Donovan Richards presented McCartney with a proclamation for the community work he’s done through his Healthy Lifestyle Changes nonprofit organization.



Steven McCartney spent two years in China and Thailand teaching physical education to high school students.