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Sweet success at the Lovin' Oven

DIANNE REBER HART - TOWNS CORRESPONDENT

November 14, 2013, 10:58PM



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By DIANNE REBER HART / Sonoma Valley Correspondent

The kitchen is bustling at a local teen center, where two boys are cranking out chocolate chip cookie dough that literally brings in the dough for the nonprofit Sonoma Valley Teen Services.

The boys are employed by the center's Lovin' Oven program that supplies cookies for the No Name Café at Sonoma Valley High School, another project of Sonoma Valley Teen Services.

The Lovin' Oven supplies the café with 900 chocolate chip cookies each week that are made entirely from scratch. Shift partners Mauricio Tapia, 15, and Angel Andrade, 14, rotate a baking schedule with the team of Veronica Alcaraz, 13, and Anagelly Gonzalez, 14.

They measure and mix ingredients and scoop the dough into cookies after school, with café personnel baking the cookies on site so they're fresh out-of-the-oven for the many students and staff members who line up daily for a 50-cent treat during lunch or before or after school.

"They're pumping it out, they're not joking around," said James Cardenas, a program coordinator at the teen center who hired all four bakers. Each submitted a resume, went through an interview and did a trial run in the kitchen.

The cookie project started a month ago, initially with ready-made Otis Spunkmeyer dough purchased from Costco. Organizers quickly realized they could buy bulk ingredients to make the dough at a greater savings.

With the help of volunteer Rich Treglia, executive chef at San Geronimo restaurant and golf course in Marin, the students adapted a recipe that was appealing in taste, smell and appearance.

With a little tweaking – chocolate chip brands without a wax coating discolor cookie dough – and taste-testing from their peers, they scored a hit.

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