Show-Me Missouri Agriculture
In this issue, we take you to St. Louis, where Freddie and Deborah Lee of Freddie Lee’s Gourmet Sauces built success from the ground up. Humility and a steadfast work ethic are the key ingredients to the success of this business. This is a story of love and barbecue sauce you won’t want to miss.

Country Spotlight
A guide to trade with Missouri’s 25th top export market.

DID YOU KNOW?
More than 5 million acres of soybeans are planted across Missouri each year.

Marketing Tips
New Year’s Resolutions for your business

- Increase Communication
- Update Your Digital Presence
- Focus on What’s Working
- Conduct Business Planning Weekly
- Engage on Social Media
- Test Your Tactics for Market Entry

When most people think of New Year’s resolutions, they think of losing weight, saving money for a “big” purchase, quitting smoking or finally landing the promotion of their dreams. Setting New Year’s resolutions for your business can increase positivity in the work environment, generate more revenue and improve your work-life balance. Following these simple resolutions can be your simple solutions for a successful 2019.
Manager’s Message

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season with your friends and family. As we move in to 2019, the new year signifies a time of fresh starts and new possibilities.

This feeling of renewed excitement is one of my favorite aspects of the new year, and this issue is filled with it, including a piece with New Year’s Resolutions for Your Business on page 6. The notion of self-improvement and re-imagined personal goals can extend to your business, too. Perhaps you will find one or a few new goals that can work for you and your business.

On page 3, you will read about the Republic of Chile, one of the most rapidly growing markets in South America for exports of U.S. farm and food products. Thanks to the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement enacted in 2004, U.S. exports have grown nearly 600 percent. Some of the top products exported to Chile are beer, poultry, pork, beef, dairy products, condiments and sauces. Perhaps the “pais del poetas”, meaning “country of poets”, could be your next new market experience!

An inspiring piece on the St. Louis barbecue sauce genius Freddie Lee James, Jr., will leave you in awe. Their story illustrates the perseverance and willingness of Freddie and his wife Deborah James to take each opportunity with humility and appreciation. Freddie Lee’s Gourmet Sauces is a reminder to us all that we hold the keys to our own success, and that we are capable of incredible feats. Their commitment to see their business succeed and willingness to go beyond their comfort zone has taken their business from their neighborhood to markets around the world.

So, in short, if this new year finds you interested in a new or expanding market for your products, don’t hesitate to reach out to our team today to see what activities we have slated for the year and to provide your suggestions on future missions or trade shows you would like to see us facilitate. As Dr. Seuss put it, “You’ll never get bored when you try something new. There’s really no limit to what you can do.” Whatever that involves for you, here’s to a bright 2019.

Brenda Verslues

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Upcoming Events

JANUARY
10-11: 48th Missouri Governor’s Conference on Agriculture (Osage Beach, Missouri)

FEBRUARY
12-14: International Production & Processing Expo (Atlanta, Georgia)

MARCH
4-9: Trade Mission to Vietnam (Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City)
25-29: Mexico Buyers’ Mission for Livestock and Genetics (Missouri)
31-April 5: Mexico Buyers’ Mission for Value-Added Forest Products (Missouri)
TRADE STRENGTHS
American brands are regarded as high quality and many brands are already present in the market.

TRADE WEAKNESSES
Chileans lack the awareness of variety and quality of U.S. products. Therefore, more marketing and education is required.

TRADE OPPORTUNITIES
Demand for healthy and convenient products continue to increase. Top products exported to Chile are beer, poultry, pork, beef, dairy products, condiments and sauces.

TRADE BARRIERS
Trade with the Republic of Chile is competitive. They have Foreign Trade Agreements with 64 countries worldwide and import products with the best price and quality.

Country Spotlight: REPUBLIC OF CHILE

International Business Relationships
Personal relationships are extremely important to the Republic of Chile and, as such, it is recommended to build connections in order to become a trusted business partner. This may rely on good customer services, such as personal visits and extensive follow-up. This can be achieved either directly or by hiring a local representative. It is worth noting that the reputation of a foreign supplier is strongly affected by the quality of its representative.

Top 5 Missouri Exports in 2017
In Thousands

- Poultry & Meat Products: $969,000
- Condiments & Sauces: $43,000
- Pork & Pork Products: $189,000
- Meat Products NESOI: $969,000
- Food Preps. & Misc. Beverages: $181,000

SOURCE: USDA GATS 2017

GDP: $452.1 billion
Official Language: Spanish
Population (2018): 17,925,262
Capital: Santiago

Trade Analysis

— TRADING OPPORTUNITIES —

— TRADING BARRIERS —

— TRADING WEAKNESSES —

— TRADING STRENGTHS —
Adulthood came fast for Freddie Lee.

At age 16, living in the ghetto of inner-city St. Louis, Freddie learned he was going to be a father. While most kids his age were learning to drive, tasting the freedoms of what it is to be an American teen, Freddie was looking down the barrel of parenthood in one of the roughest neighborhoods in the state.

Shortly after finding out about the pregnancy, he bore his impending responsibilities with grit and determination. He married his girlfriend and prepared for a life together. Moments after the wedding ceremony took place, still waving at the departing family and friends that had come to his parents’ house to witness the nuptials, he was hit with the gravity of his new role.

"You’ve got man’s shoes on now, boy,” his father said. “Men don’t live with their parents. Men provide for the family they’ve created.”

That would be the last morning he would ever wake up in his childhood home. A freshman in high school, with a mere $200 dollars to his name and new bride in tow, Freddie found a room to rent that night and began to piece together the realities of his changing life.

By 17, Freddie quit school and began an education of hard knocks under the mentorship of his life’s greatest influence, his father. With no more than a third grade education, Freddie Lee Sr. was the first black carpenter at the largest home construction company in the region. Beginning as a laborer and retiring as a foreman, Freddie Lee Sr. climbed his way up, working tirelessly to provide a life for his wife and family of nine children. The oldest of his father’s kids, Freddie Lee Jr., intended to do the same.

Work was no foreign concept to another young teen just a few blocks away. Under the example and full time guardianship of her great grandmother, Deborah had been learning the value of a dollar since she was a child. Assisting in her grandmother’s grocery store, picking fruit and greens as a field hand in Mississippi and taking odd jobs here and there, Deborah followed the work, because from the start work was what she had been taught, and work was what she knew.

“Nobody gonna hand you anything,” her great grandmother said between shifts in a never ending day. “You gotta work for everything you’ve got.”

And for Deborah, everything meant just that. Everything meant paying rent in her grandmother’s home. Everything meant buying her own food. Everything meant spending spare change on a bus fare to get to another job, to pay for everything else.

Coming from a long line of single mothers, Deborah also knew the harsh realities of what she was up against when her pregnancy test turned pink. Her unborn child in mind and two I-do’s later, she knew that her “everything” just got a whole lot bigger.

As childhood hopes often dwindle at the expense of adult experience, it was not long before both Deborah and Freddie found their ideals of whole families disintegrating before their eyes. Broken promises and young love lost, they both found themselves with a title they never intended to attain - single parent. For Deborah, this meant taking her daughter and fleeing her husband for a better life. Even though that life meant living in and out of decaying shelters and “playing house” in abandoned vehicles to hide homelessness from her child. For Freddie, this meant getting through the hard times by finding a roof to put over his head, even when that roof was falling in, over buildings vacated or left for foreclosure.

Nobody gonna hand you anything.”

But for both, a hope for brighter days and an unbeatable work ethic made dark nights more tolerable.

Although they didn’t know it, brighter days were on their way. True to form, each kept doing the only thing they knew how - work. And work pulled them through. In addition to his job at the construction company, Freddie took every paying gig that came his way. He mopped each floor of a multi-story building. He unloaded trucks at the local Goodwill. He waited tables at Adam’s Mark hotel (now the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch). Nothing was below him, and everything was an opportunity.

Similarly, Deborah took the early shift at an aerospace part manufacturing company, just so she could turn around and work the late shift at a large pharma conglomerate when she was through. Waking every morning at 4 a.m. for jobs in corporate worlds unknown to her; returning
each night at midnight to the crime-ridden streets of a neighborhood she was all too familiar with. Day in, day out, every one the same.

Years of toil and routine eventually found returns in steady paychecks. Things began to slowly turn around. Deborah was able to save some menial extra cash and put it toward a home which she would live in, fix up and rent out room by room to create additional passive income. Similarly, after becoming financially stable enough to enjoy some free time, Freddie began tinkering in the kitchen, making barbecue sauce to give to family and friends. Life was by no means easy, but it wasn’t the constant struggle that it was before. Each accustomed to their own path less traveled, neither anticipated them to cross.

After meeting Deborah through a mutual acquaintance, Freddie knew within minutes that he had found his counterpart in another. Practical and self-reliant, she was like no one he had ever experienced; and his uninhibited character softened her reticence, resulting in the last thing either expected - a partnership that worked, founded in love.

Love and barbecue sauce.

After years of testing everything in his kitchen cabinet, it was not until Deborah weighed in on his barbecue sauce recipe that he found the perfect ratio of spices. Quite frankly, she was his missing ingredient.

The perfect combination finally realized, it wasn’t long before the neighborhood was clamoring for it. Ghetto Sauce, they jokingly called it, was a glib reference to a dim “dream ticket out” of current circumstances and out of the ghetto.

Now in nearly 600 grocery stores throughout the nation, on Amazon and exported to China, Ghetto Sauce has most certainly made its way out of the hood. A decade of continued work, door-to-door sales, intimidating meetings with grocery store conglomerates and the boon of internet retail, Deborah and Freddie Lee watch as their sauce now travels from East St. Louis to the Far East. Born out of a small home kitchen, where the sounds of sirens and gunshots were as commonplace as the ingredients on the stove, the pair never thought they would see such growth come from such humble beginnings. Partnering with corporate barbecue giants like Big Green Egg and a strategic initiative that includes opening their own factory in the neighborhood they call home, the pair are sharing their success. With their own history and challenges as the foundation of their commercial blueprint, their factory pay will nearly double the minimum wage, and its convenient placement on the city bus line should make life a little bit easier for their employees than it was for themselves. With incentive packages in place as a reward for success, Deborah and Freddie Lee know that at the core of every good job done, is the human doing it.

“You’ve got to recognize that everyone is facing their own battle,” Deborah said. “Black, white, rich or poor, everyone has a story, and it’s worth listening to.”

Humility and work ethic central to their success, the streets they grew up on are still shaping their story every day. While the sauce has opened doors, they don’t plan to leave the home they know.

“As long as it’s taken us to get where we are, it can be gone in a flash - that’s life,” Freddie said. “This is all God’s doing, not ours. We are his vessels, but we are enjoying the ride he’s got us on.”

Love and barbecue sauce.
MARKETING TIPS

New Year’s Resolutions for Your Business

1. **Delegate tasks**
   Stop wearing all the hats and share the work to address your team’s talents.

2. **Automate more business processes**
   Delete monotonous tasks and implement processes to increase efficiency.

3. **Prioritize balance**
   Keep your work at work by eliminating interruptions and make time for yourself and family while at home.

4. **Be proactive**
   Set goals for the future but make sure they’re realistic.

5. **Increase communication**
   Focus on each individual client and remember quality is more important than quantity.

6. **Invest in education.**
   Allow time for professional development and learning new things to make yourself more attractive to clients.

7. **Update your digital presence.**
   Design a website that is helpful to your clientele, easily navigable and highlights your company’s story.

8. **Focus on what’s working.**
   Eliminate products and services that are outdated or not generating enough revenue.

9. **Conduct business planning weekly.**
   Meet with your team more frequently to stay focused and avoid costly mistakes.

10. **Engage on social media.**
    Interact with your target audience and make yourself known.

Next step? That’s easy. Turn these ideas into goals and create positive changes for your business. Even if you incorporate one or all of these resolutions, your business will prosper in 2019. Here’s to the new you!

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**OUR TEAM**

**Brenda Verslues**
Marketing Manager
Ag Business Development
(573) 522-9560

**Andrea Powell**
Marketing Specialist
Livestock & Genetics
(573) 526-4849

**Kayla Otto**
Marketing Specialist
Forestry
(573) 751-7213

**Jennifer Kliethermes**
Marketing Specialist
Food & Beverage
(573) 751-5611

**Leslie Fischer**
Marketing Specialist
Grains, Oilseeds & Fiber Crops
(573) 751-8187

**Jennifer Janssen**
Marketing Specialist
Communications & Outreach
(573) 751-5613

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P.O. Box 630, 1616 Missouri Blvd., Jefferson City, MO 65102
Agriculture.Mo.Gov | (573) 751-4762