



Meet Amy Welch, manager of Highland Chocolates...

1. Describe Your Business:

Highland Chocolates is a nonprofit that provides job skills training and employment for adults with disabilities. Famous for our chocolate pretzel bark, we use premium Pennsylvania-made chocolate to create a wide variety of chocolate treats available in our store, online, and through our wholesale partners. Our tagline is "Extraordinary Chocolates by Extraordinary People!"

2. Tell us your story:

Highland Chocolates began in 1994 as a program through the Tioga County Human Services Department. The first chocolate was a handmade Scottish truffle (hence the name). A few years ago, state licensing rules changed and Partners In Progress (a nonprofit vocational agency in Mansfield, PA) took over the running of Highland Chocolates. We currently employ 12 chocolatiers and have 4 staff members.

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

I started as a freelance marketing consultant and began full-time as manager of Highland in June of 2017. I've been given the freedom to experiment (some wins, some fails) and try new ideas to help the business grow. Partners In Progress is really invested in training up their staff, and to be supported while you're learning is invaluable.

4. What inspires you?

I love the excitement that our chocolate workers express when they master a new skill or help to make a new product. It reminds me how important our mission is.

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

My biggest challenge is growing the business while staying true to what we do – making every item by hand, packaging it by hand, etc. We launched a "Sweet Souvenir" collection last summer and the popularity of the items has kept us on our toes. We want to create more new chocolates, but not at the expense of slowing down our production time.

6. What is your favorite local activity?

I love Pine Creek and the entire PA Grand Canyon area. I got married at my family's cabin right on the creek and spending time there is my favorite way of de-stressing.

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

Highland Chocolates is open year round and we invite everyone to stop in for a visit, sample some chocolates, and take a free factory tour to meet the extraordinary people who make all the chocolates! We have so much fun - there is a lot of laughter, singing along to the radio, and really delicious chocolates!