

CREAM KING



This summer, Nancy Crowe of Maple Park has been cruising around area neighborhoods in her modified school bus that now acts as an ice cream truck. (Dennis Hines photo)

Cream of the crop

Maple Park woman takes to the streets to bring tasty treats to young and old alike each summer

Nancy Crowe of Maple Park has spent most of her summer offering cool, tasty treats to area children. Crowe operates her own ice cream truck business, Cream King, Inc. Crowe said, for several months, she and her husband were trying to think of a possible business venture and eventually decided to operate an ice cream truck.

"We were trying to think of some sort of business that we could get going," Crowe said. "We were thinking there is no ice cream truck out here. It's a fun job. I love kids, and it's a summer gig. This way, I get my winters off."

Crowe and her husband purchased an old mini-school bus from a company in Chicago and converted it into an ice cream truck. They painted the bus blue and installed the necessary equipment inside the vehicle.

"We painted it ourselves, ripped the seats out and brought a couple of freezers and threw them in there,"

by Dennis Hines
The MidWeek

Crowe said.

Throughout the summer, Crowe drove her ice cream truck to several surrounding communities including, DeKalb, Sycamore, Cortland, Maple Park, Elburn and St. Charles. She had to receive a permit in each community in order to operate her ice cream truck. She said officials from each community conducted a background check before granting her a permit.

"In the beginning in Sycamore, I don't think the kids realized (there was an ice cream truck)," Crowe said. "They were thinking there was a school bus playing music. I don't think they realized it was an ice cream truck. It's, finally, now starting to get a little bit better in Sycamore. The kids get so excited."

As part of her business, Crowe sells various ice cream products from Good Humor, Klondike and Popsicle. Crowe receives her items from a distributor in Melrose Park.

"It's the novelty stuff, like Sponge Bob Square Pants and Dora the Explorer and Spider Man and the Incredible Hulk," Crowe said. "Then, I also carry the chocolate eclairs and the Oreo bars, and I have the Oreo ice cream sandwiches, but I have 26 different items to choose from."

Crowe also attends ice cream socials, block parties and birthday parties to offer her products to area residents. She also plans to participate in several community events in the future including the Cortland Fall Festival in October.

"For birthday parties, depending on the age, if a family wants me to paint myself up like a clown or something, I'm always willing to do that to make it a little more fun for the kids," she said.

Crowe said she did not receive as many customers during the summer months as she originally projected. She said the hot temperatures may have caused many children to stay indoors this summer.

"With the heat, it wasn't that great, because everybody is in the air conditioning," Crowe said. "You would think

that with it being hot, they would all be out there, but everybody's inside playing in the basement, but now that it's starting to cool off, it's getting better. There's good days and bad days. It's all weather permitting."

Crowe said she enjoys watching the children's reaction when she drives her ice cream truck through their neighborhood.

"They're jumping up and down, and they're just so excited," Crowe said. "It makes me feel great about my job. It's one job I can honestly say I enjoy doing every day."

Crowe said she also has received a lot of support from many of the children's parents.

"A lot of the parents are saying how excited they are to have it (the ice cream truck) there, because their kids have never seen an ice cream truck out this way," Crowe said. "So, it is just a wonderful childhood experience that I think everyone should enjoy."

Crowe drives around in her ice cream truck every day from 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. She said she plans to operate the business until October.

"I used to stay out until about 8:45 p.m., but now that it's getting dark around 8 p.m., I don't want to be out when it's dark," Crowe said.

Crowe plans to expand her business in the future. She said, by the end of next summer, she plans to purchase more ice cream trucks and hire some employees to help her operate the business.

"My eventual goal is for me to just be running the business and sending people out," Crowe said. "It's a great summer job, and I hope (the business) will be even larger next year. I'm going to stick with the school bus thing, because I think it's a very unique idea. It will stand out."

In the future, Crowe plans to offer an ice cream truck in other surrounding communities such as Rochelle, Rockford, Hampshire and Burlington.

"There's ice cream trucks all over the Chicagoland area. It's just out this way that there isn't any," Crowe said. "It's wonderful. There's no competition."

Before starting her ice cream truck business, Crowe worked as a travel agent for about 12 years. She said she worked at an office in Rolling Meadows which was a long commute from Maple Park. She said, now that she operates her own business, she is able to spend more time with her 9-month-old son Devin.

"The (travel agency industry) has been going down in the last few years, and I was working in Rolling Meadows. I had been working there before we moved out here four years ago, and that's why I stayed working there," Crowe said. "Then once I had my son, I was going to be an at-home mom, then we thought of the ice cream truck business, so now I'm working and a mom."

Crowe worked for an ice cream truck business about 13 years ago while attending college. For more information about Crowe's business call 827-3662.

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