



# Elizabeth Porteus

Vero Beach, Florida



Smiley Riley's Ice Cream, LLC

## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Elizabeth Porteus:*

Originally from New York, Elizabeth Porteus, Owner of Smiley Riley's Ice Cream and Army Veteran, launched her business in September 2018 as a way to teach her daughter, Riley, how to run a small business and because of a lack of good ice cream shops in the area. According to Porteus, Riley wasn't college minded and that starting a business was the perfect alternative to a "traditional" education. Porteus shared the story behind her journey and what the future holds for Smiley Riley's.

"I moved with my mom to Florida during my senior year of high school," she said. "After I graduated, I joined the United States Army with my sister and served from 1990 through 1994. After the Army, I got my Bachelor's Degree and worked for Nextel Communications as a Tax Manager. When they merged with Sprint in 2005, people were getting laid off so I decided to go to grad school, where I studied Speech

Language Pathology. Since 2007, I've been a speech language pathologist working with geriatric patients.”

Around April 2018, the thought of starting an ice cream shop went from the idea stage to the action stage. Porteus enrolled into an ice cream “boot camp”, located in The Villages, FL, where she learned the art of making ice cream and how to turn it into a business. According to Porteus, that experience was the jump start she needed.

“I gained a lot of confidence from the boot camp,” she said. “I came out thinking, ‘I can totally do this’. The first thing we bought was the equipment, which I stored in my house until we found our location. The space we found was previously a tanning salon, so we had to do a lot of demo work to get it ready. It was an exciting time, but we were also very nervous.”

Porteus launched her business after summer and a few months before the busy winter season when northern tourists flock to Florida for warm weather and sunshine. It was a rough few months and Porteus had to invest a significant amount of personal savings into, not only the build-out, equipment and inventory, but also advertising. Nevertheless, she stuck with it and, when January hit, things really picked up.

“We put an ad in one of those Valpak coupon booklets,” she said. “That really helped bring in new customers. It was a slow start, but, in general, the response from the community has been incredible.”

Smiley Riley's Ice Cream is unique in several ways. For one, they're a veteran owned and woman owned business. They also offer a very unique variety of homemade ice cream, including 15 adult liquor-infused

flavors as well as regular nonalcoholic ice cream. They pride themselves on being different by offering out of the box, unusual flavors and providing a fun atmosphere with puzzles and games for the patrons to play while dining.

Looking ahead, Liz and Riley, who both love to make customers smile with their unique flavor combinations, are currently renovating an old ice cream truck. They plan to create a presence and sell their products at local events. They also plan to expand their product line to offer ready-to-go ice cream cakes, pints, ice cream sandwiches and other products.

They're targeting upscale events like weddings and other corporate events.

What advice does Liz have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Don't be afraid to take the first step," she said. "Fear prevents you from achieving your goals. Also, read and do your research and get to know your competitors."

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