

Who do you think you are?



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College is already stressful enough for most, but senior Josh Dingle has the unique added stress of running a business while also being a full-time student. As co-owner and general manager of the recently-opened Big Açaí here on campus, Dingle certainly has a busy schedule that has him working six days a week with almost no time off. Managing a business is difficult work that never stops, and neither does he.

For those who aren't aware, Açaí bowls are essentially a bowl with a thick smoothie as the base and accented with the customer's choice of toppings, which include granola, fresh fruit, and more. Açaí bowls are very popular on the West Coast—California and Hawaii in particular—but are slowly making their way to the Midwest.

While some cafes offer solely bowls and smoothies, some have a more extensive menu. According to Big Açaí's website, the Ames location provides organic sorbet bowls and dairy-free smoothies, along with avocado toast, vegan burritos, homemade soups, salads, and handcrafted espresso beverages and hot chocolate.

One of the main reasons Dingle became involved in this business venture and brought it to Iowa State was because he wasn't seeing a healthy option on campus for students. He wanted to provide an alternative for those who want to eat healthier or have dietary restrictions that limit their food intake. While it is challenging to manage both school and the business and deal with other issues that cause stress and sleep deprivation, Dingle said he "couldn't ask for anything better." The Ames location on ISU's campus is a good indicator of if and how to expand. Dingle states that Big Açaí's demographics are pretty even between men and women, and the cafe is very popular with athletes as a healthy source of fuel.

"I had no plans of owning a business—at all," Dingle said.

Although he is still figuring out some aspects, Dingle would rather figure out his failures now, when he's young, rather than further along his business journey.



Unlike most business owners, Dingle isn't in it for the money. He feels as though he's doing something beneficial for society as well as the student body at Iowa State by providing healthier options through Big Açaí.

"Seeing people with smiles at the end of the day...it just makes me feel good that I'm providing a product that is doing something healthier for them," Dingle said.

Smiles and a healthy life weren't always a part of his journey, however. Early on, Dingle was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA), an aggressive form of the condition. JRA was something that kept Dingle from leading a normal life growing up, causing him to struggle in school in his hometown of Crystal Lake, Ill. Despite this challenging obstacle in his life, Dingle credits JRA with shaping who he is as a person. He grew from the experience and learned that if you fail, you fail. It's a part of life.

While his family, friends and himself helped get him through, Dingle's mom, Patrice Stricker, was a major component. She was by his side through eight years of remission and more, which showed Dingle just how much he is cared for. Dingle also credits his mom as a big influence in his business journey because she is so business-savvy, and he also calls her one of his biggest inspirations.

For him, family is the most important, followed by friends, school and then the business.

This experience and various setbacks play a role in the values Dingle holds close. For him, family is the most important, followed by friends, school and then the business.

This college senior values waking up, first and foremost, which is something that most take for granted. This value, along with enjoying life, stems from his illness and those many years of remission. Regardless, Dingle is glad he recovered and leads a healthier lifestyle today. Seeing people with smiles at the cafe and various events they host





around campus and the community makes him feel good inside. As aforementioned, the drive of this business is not for personal gain. After a brief interaction or conversation with Dingle, even the casual observer can tell that he is a kind soul who cares so much for others and their well-being, whether that be physical, emotional or both.

A goal-driven person, Dingle understands that a business takes time and a large amount of hard work, which is why most of his goals are long-term in nature. To achieve said goals, Dingle has a strong team backing him that has helped him get where he is today. The start of this business comes from Jake Jenkins, the 'idea guy' who brought the idea of açai bowls to the Midwest back from California. Lanette Byers is the one who brings everything together, as she has a financial background. And finally, Brett Schwerts is the one who brought Dingle into the business in the first place. As both the other general manager at Big Açai Ames and Dingle's best friend, he is the one who started Dingle's whole journey. Dingle

acknowledges that he definitely would not be where he's at without Schwerts.

After graduation, equipped with a bachelor's degree in marketing, Dingle would like to manage Big Açai full-time and hopefully expand to other locations. As others also have the idea of moving Açai bowls and other healthier options into the Midwest, time is of the essence. Therefore, Dingle wants to implement his goals as soon as possible and hopes to achieve big things in the future.

The Ames location of Big Açai is located at 2702 Lincoln Way in the ground-level of the Union Student Housing Building. Their hours of operation are M-F 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sat. and Sun. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more

