

# Sarasota

## SWEET STORY

### Kona Ice Trucks Are Helping Local Schools Raise Money, One Shaved Ice at a Time

**‘We simply care about our kids, and if there’s a need, we go after it,’ says Elizabeth Boyers, one of the local franchise’s owners.**

By [Allison Forsyth](#) 3/5/2020 at 11:32am



On a sunny day in Lakewood Ranch, students in a fifth-period P.E. class at Nolan Middle School gather around an oasis that will not only quench their thirst and delight their tastebuds, but will also do some good for their school. The [Kona Ice truck](#) is up and running, parked on school grounds and playing its happy, island tunes. After students run warm-up laps, their coach allows them to line up and order their favorite flavor of Hawaiian shaved ice from the tropically decorated truck’s service window.

Kona Ice is not your ordinary neighborhood ice cream truck. The company is a national franchise with more than 1,200 Hawaiian-themed shaved ice trucks in 48 states. The company began in Kentucky in 2007,

with the goal of not only serving cool treats to kids, but also working to support good causes.

Elizabeth Boyers and her son-in-law, Joe McVicker, started their Kona Ice franchise in 2015, serving the Sarasota and Lakewood Ranch area. They own three colorful and inviting trucks, including a miniature version and a kiosk, which provide a fun, convenient experience for locations like cafeterias, baseball games and festivals. Boyers and McVicker are particularly passionate about working with schools, helping to raise money or reward students for good behavior.

“We love dealing with the kids,” says Boyers. “They know us, and get so excited when we come to their school.” Boyers and McVicker’s franchise works with 30 to 40 local schools, implementing a give-back program tailored to address each school’s needs. Nolan Middle School needed money for its physical education department, but Kona Ice has also raised funds for more specific needs like art supplies, weight-lifting equipment and jog-a-thon events.

More than just a business, Boyers and McVicker have built meaningful relationships with schools, students and their parents. Boyers even attends PTO meetings to get more involved, and has judged science fairs, participated in career days and chaperoned for field trips. “We’re really partners with each school,” says Boyers. “We simply care about our kids, and if there’s a need, we go after it.”

In five years, the truck has raised more than \$200,000. The fundraising process begins when students bring money to school to pay for a Kona shaved ice. Then, 25 percent of sales go back to the school or participating organization. The company also created an incentive called #seethechange. Through that program, customers can purchase a color-changing cup of shaved ice and a portion of the sale goes to [Adopt a Classroom](#), an organization that allows teachers to create online wishlists for classroom needs.

Kona Ice offers a variety of unique flavors, with allergen- and sugar-free options, too, giving every kid a chance to indulge in a sweet treat, despite dietary restrictions. “We want to make sure that every kid can participate and feel included,” says McVicker. The most popular flavor is blue raspberry, but the truck’s Flavor Wave, a self-serve station, allows kids to mix and match as many flavors as they want.

“Everyone can’t help but smile when they see our trucks,” says Boyers.

*To learn more about Kona Ice, call (941) 685-2881 or visit the truck’s [website](#).*

<http://bit.ly/2Im8rCz>