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## SMART COOKIES

Sweet Things are happening at the Lower Eastside Girls Club

**MOVE OVER, GIRL Scouts**—there's a new cookie in town. For the last five years, the Lower Eastside Girls Club—which offers developmental programs and job training to over 500 New York City girls ages 8 to 25—has been introducing members to small-business management through the art of baking. Under the leadership of club director Lynn Pentecost, who describes baking as a “nice lost art” with “enormous career opportunities,” the girls have been baking up a storm in volunteers’ kitchens and at a local public school, and selling their wares to corporate clients. This past October, however, the girls took their sweets to the street by opening their first storefront, the Sweet Things Bakeshop. A bright, open kitchen on the once-depressed but now trendy Avenue C, the shop is decorated with vintage aprons and antiques, and is staffed by 30 club members and neighborhood moms. Visitors can buy scones, petite chocolate and vanilla cupcakes, muffins, granola, and the girls’ signature sugar cookies, as well as beautiful handmade mother-and-daughter apron sets, which make great gifts. “Seeing as we’ve always taught the baking classes, and have always had these huge corporate orders,” says Pentecost, “we thought, ‘Why not buy a coffee pot and open a café?’”

The Sweet Things Bakeshop is part of a community economic development initiative Pentecost hopes will result in the employment of more young women. The operation gives girls like Valerie Galindo, 19, Tiffany Tharatts, 20, and Qushoma Johnson, 22—all graduates of the club’s ten-week “Cookie Academy” entrepreneurial training program—an opportunity to



Valerie Galindo, left, and Erica Negron, right, are on the case

apply the business skills they've learned, while the income they generate supports club programs. To get a sense of the true benefits of this project, however, all anyone has to do is talk with the girls. When asked about her future career plans, Galindo replies emphatically. “I definitely want to be an entrepreneur.” [KATE MCGREGOR] Sweet Things Bakeshop is located at 136 Avenue C, N.Y.C. For more info, visit [www.girlsclub.org](http://www.girlsclub.org).