

'Scentchip' creators thrive despite troubled Texas economy

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — They may not be the biggest or the best sculptures Ken Moore has ever created, but his 79 varieties of wax Scentchips have proved to be the product with the sweetest smell of success.

Moore, a former clinical psychologist, inventor and artist, and his artist wife, Kathy, first delved into the candle-making business almost 10 years ago.

It didn't go well. While Mrs. Moore struggled to keep the business going, Moore worked as a restaurant manager to keep them solvent.

Things changed when Moore

dreamed up Scentchips — scent-saturated chips of wax shaped like a flower and leaf and measuring less than 1 inch in length. The chips can be placed in a bowl and used like potpourri or burned using a wax cone in the center of the mixture of chips.

This year the Moores expect their Scentchips to gross \$8 million in sales. The patented chips are sold in retail stores in all 50 states.

"That isn't bad, particularly when we first started out the only experience I had ever had in candle-making was in the fourth grade when we made candles using a milk carton

and a wick," says Moore, 40.

In creating a new product category, Scentchips successfully fought off corporate giant Hallmark, which had tried to market a similar product under the name Scent Chips.

The Moores' chips come in 52 fragrances, including vanilla, chocolate, cinnamon, strawberry, lemon, orange, lime, maple, clove and the Christmas scents of frankincense and myrrh.

There are 19 fragrances mimicking Chanel, Obsession, Halston, Polo, Opium and other perfumes,

and an eight-chip variety of Hawaiian scents: pineapple, white ginger, red ginger, gardenia, hibiscus, pikake, plumeria and tuberose.

"Scentchips are not tied to the local economy as other products are, so we've been successful."

— Ken Moore, Scentchip maker

The Scentchips venture that first only included the Moores and some

of their family members now employs 75 people.

Moore has written two books that tell merchants how to sell Scentchips and another that tells them how to mix the chips to get different aromas.

By this time next year, Moore expects to chip in some of the Scentchips earnings to finance construction of an old Texas Christmas Village about 7 miles north of San Antonio.

His 50,000 square-foot Scentchips production plant will serve as the anchor attraction among numerous arts and crafts shops that will open for a six-week Christmas sales and

show extravaganza.

"Sometimes we feel guilty that this Texas economy we're doing well," Moore says. "Scentchips are not tied to the local economy as other products are, so we've been successful."

"What we want to do is create an organization of manufacturers in this village and to help them in terms of going into the marketplace," Moore says.

"We know there is a tremendous amount of talented people out there and we've already been through a lot of what they have gone through and we just want to help," he says.

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