ArchBridge Family Office

From Hobby to Hustle: Turning Summer Passions Into Profits

Another school year has wrapped up, and for many children, summer's unique rhythm has fully set in. Gone are the daily bell schedules, replaced by a looser, more languid pace that often includes swimming, relaxing, and enjoying a break from academic routines.

While some teens might relish the chance to simply unwind, for others, summer offers an exciting opportunity for self-directed pursuits—and even profitability. Whether it's pet-sitting, teaching a skill, starting a neighborhood camp, or selling homemade creations, the aim isn't necessarily to build a business empire (though they might); it's to help teens link **effort** with **value**, **interest** with **independence**, and **passion** with **purpose**.

Before going too deep, let's address a common summer temptation: many teens would be happy to while away the summer hours passively interacting with their phones, playing video games, or…well, that's about it. For right now, let's focus on the hands-on, in-person, earn-a-few-dollars kind of summer hustle that helps teens grow in confidence and capability. As parents, this is our chance to support meaningful, real-world learning without needing a syllabus.

Igniting the Idea

Take photography, for example. Maybe your teen isn't just snapping selfies—they're always framing shots of everyday moments, talking about how the lighting changes at golden hour, or experimenting with techniques they learned in a high school photography class. Perhaps they've simply mastered the art of getting the family dog to sit still for a (surprisingly decent) portrait. Either way, you might suggest they explore offering low-stakes photo sessions for events, senior portraits, or yes, even pet photography. (Without opposable thumbs, that dog's ability to snap its own cute photo is severely limited, after all.)

Or maybe your teen is the proud steward of your family's 100-year-old sourdough starter and spends weekends perfecting their bread recipe. That could be the start of a small, order-based baking venture for friends, neighbors, or extended family. I have it on good authority that a local bagel shop began similarly, from an idea and an abundance of time during Covid. What begins as encouragement can turn into a coachable moment. Ask thoughtful questions—not in a grilling way, but in a spirit of partnership: *How much would you want to charge for that? What do you need to get started? What would success look like to you?* These conversations are invaluable. They develop problem-solving skills, help kids take ownership of the process, and teach them to balance time, energy, and resources in pursuit of a goal

The Parent as Mentor

How you approach these conversations goes a long way, too. Your goal is not to squelch their ideas, but to show that they have your support and guidance. It's important to resist the urge to over-manage; let them stumble a bit. Maybe they underprice their services or overcommit on delivery times. That's okay. These small missteps, especially in a low-stakes environment like summer break, become the most powerful teachers. They build resilience and adaptability—and those are traits that no assigned summer work can match.

As they move through the experience, you can introduce light-touch guidance on core financial principles. If they need to buy ingredients or materials, how does that factor into what they charge? Bam! There's your intro into talking about cost and profit. You might suggest they set aside part of their earnings to reinvest in tools or supplies—while I wouldn't suggest buying the newest, best, or fanciest camera equipment for them (even if it's in your means to do so), you can certainly match their savings dollar-for-dollar to make big-purchase items more obtainable.

And then, of course, there's the soft-skill side: communication, reliability, presentation. Writing a simple flyer or social post to advertise their services becomes a mini-marketing lesson. Following up with a client or delivering a promised order teaches accountability. These are the building blocks of future professional confidence.

Passion Projects in Practice

Consider a teen passionate about coaching. They might have a knack for demonstrating how to play shots and when to take those shots. Through discussion, they could offer summer coaching to younger students, printing flyers, setting rates, and coaching a handful of players once a week. By the end of the summer, they could earn a substantial amount—but more importantly, realize they have something valuable to offer and learn how to share it responsibly.

You might worry that introducing money into the equation could sap the joy from your child's hobby. However, more often than not, it enhances it by giving the activity a new layer of meaning— one that's grounded in effort and mutual value. For many kids, seeing that others are willing to pay for what they create or provide is an incredible boost to self-esteem. It's also worthwhile to help your child think about what to *do* with the money they earn. Should they save it toward something special? Use a portion to fund more of their project? Make a small donation to a cause they care about? These choices become early exercises in financial decision-making and personal agency.

Elementary-age children often discover a love for crafting. One child might love making beaded jewelry while another discovers a knack for designing custom logos. With some assistance from their parents, they could set up a shared "shop" in their neighborhood. It might not be wildly profitable—they might spend more on materials and give away more than they sell—but it *would* be wildly empowering. Over time, those children would learn to talk to customers, make change, handle feedback, and manage the ebb and flow of sales. They might (or realistically, *will*) argue over decisions and grow closer by spending so much time together. At the end of the day, they will come home not only with money in hand, but with a new understanding of their own capabilities.

Beyond the Sidewalk Stand

Not every summer hustle needs to be public facing, either. A teen might take on behind-the-scenes work like scouring estate and garage sales and reselling clothes online, digitizing old family photos for neighbors, or organizing and updating local businesses' Google listings and social media pages. The beauty of these projects is that they can be as introverted or extroverted, and structured or flexible, as your child needs them to be.

The Lasting Legacy

At its core, this is about cultivating a sense of initiative. It's about showing kids that they don't have to wait until they're older, credentialed, or handed a job to begin making and contributing. They can start now, right where they are, with what they already know and love. That shift—from consumer to creator, from dependent to earner—is transformative. As unpopular as it might make me with my former teachers, it will lead to *significantly more learning* than any summer class.

So, if your child has a passion—no matter how quirky or niche it may seem—don't dismiss it as just a phase. Ask a few questions, offer a bit of encouragement, and see what unfolds. June, July, and August have a way of creating space for surprising things to grow—and watching your child build something of their own might be the most rewarding part of the summer.



Chris Brennan
Wealth Education Specialist

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