

MONEY COUNTS CASE STUDY:

Abby Fleck is Makin' Bacon

ABBEY FLECK WAS 8 YEARS OLD WHEN SHE INVENTED A BACON COOKING DISH THAT MADE HER RICH AND FAMOUS. Years later, the company she and her dad created to make and to sell the device is still going strong and bringing in \$1 million annually.

On a Saturday morning in 1993, Abbey's dad, Jon cooked some bacon in their St. Paul, Minnesota home. He ran out of paper towels to soak up grease from the meat. He started using newspaper, which Abbey's mom didn't like. Jon joked that maybe he should let the bacon "drip dry."

That silly comment got Abbey thinking. She figured maybe you can "drip dry" greasy bacon. After a lot of thought, she created the Makin' Bacon device. It is a plastic dish with inch high sides and has three T-shaped arms in the middle. You hang bacon strips over the top of the Ts and cook them in a microwave. Grease runs off the bacon into the dish, making the meat healthier and clean-up easier.

Abbey and her dad got a patent for the dish. (A patent is a legal document that says she was the inventor and nobody could make or sell this product unless they paid her.) They started a company and began looking for ways to sell Abbey's invention. Daughter and father hit it big when Armour, a major meat company, put coupons for the dish on 15 million packs of bacon. The orders poured in. After the Armour offer proved a success, Wal-Mart ordered thousands. Buyers now can find the dish at Wal-Mart, K Mart and Target stores.

Abbey's family pulled together to make the dish a success. For example, when her company needed money to expand, her grandfather borrowed some. Her dad helped sell the dish. So did Abbey. Reporters were fascinated with her story. So, she did interviews to promote the dish with Good Housekeeping and Parade magazines. And, Abbey appeared on the Today Show, Dateline NBC and shows with David Letterman and Oprah Winfrey. Plus, Abbey got a lot of recognition for her idea and work. In fact, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the nation's best engineering schools, honored her as an inspiring inventor.



Today, Abbey, in her 20s, and her dad still run the company, which branched out into other products. In fact, they just sold a gas-saving device to a big American trucking company.

Abbey's story shows that success can come to anybody with the right idea. Keeping Abbey's experience in mind, have some fun by:

- **Thinking of something you could invent. Remember it has to be something that other people want and will pay for. Use your imagination. It's ok to make up something silly.**
- **Considering how you would make your invention. Would you build a factory? Partner with somebody who already had a factory? Or, could you and some friends make this item at home?**
- **Imagining how you would promote your product. Would you go on TV, like Abbey? Call reporters? Have ads on TV? Create a website?**
- **Picturing what you would do with the money you made. Would you save it? Invest it? Use it to expand the business?**