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BOLD TYPES

What's in a name? For Lowell youth group, it's all Madd Love

By **Jon Chesto** GLOBE STAFF OCTOBER 30, 2018

Catching supermarket shoppers' attention can be a tricky task. And the folks who run **Utec** knew that the name of the **Lowell** center for young adults returning from jail might be a tough sell at your local Whole Foods.

So they worked with **Boston ad agency CTP** to come up with a new brand for their products: "**Madd Love Market.**" (The Utec name itself won't change.) The new name will soon appear on cutting boards that Utec sells through about 35 **Whole Foods** stores in the Northeast, starting in November, and online through **Waltham-based Preserve**. And then it's on to other products, such as a line of almond nut butter and peanut butter that debuts in January. Salad tongs could be next, or maybe dog beds made through Utec's mattress recycling program.

"The feedback was, Utec does not necessarily sound delicious when you walk down the aisle of the food store," says **Gregg Croteau**, **Utec's executive director**.

For Croteau and his team, the move into food sales represents an important milestone. These products, all made at Utec's campus in Lowell, give young people ages 17 to 25 with criminal backgrounds a chance to start over — to learn a skill, build a resume, earn some money.

But the products are also an increasingly important source of revenue: Utec gets about \$1 million of its \$7 million budget from what it terms "social enterprise" — its business lines, including catering and facility rentals. Croteau wants that number to grow past the \$1.5 million mark in Utec's next fiscal year.

"Madd Love" is a greeting Utec youth and employees say to each other, and a phrase that has been incorporated into its mission statement.

Fred Conover, **president of CTP**, says he believes the phrase will resonate because it captures the unconditional acceptance that each Utec staff member gives to the people they're trying to help. "As a branding device, it's unique," Conover says. "It's a feel good."

CTP first connected with Utec through its work with **Eastern Bank**. Utec's story was featured in the "**Join us for Good**" campaign that CTP launched for Eastern in 2016. CTP was so impressed, Conover says, that it offered to help Croteau for free. Law firm **Ropes & Gray** also contributed, by providing pro bono trademark advice and services for the Madd Love Market brand.

"We were obviously looking for something that would be distinguishable but also recognized as part of this culture," Croteau says. "We [often] say, everybody who walks through the door, they should feel like they won the lottery."



CHRIS MORRIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE
Gregg Croteau