

NEWS

317 Project: She's in charge. This teen is a boss at Ritter's Frozen Custard and in life

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The 317 Project tells stories of life in all of Indianapolis' vibrant neighborhoods – 317 words at a time.

At Ritter's Frozen Custard in mid-March, in the middle of the day, 18-year-old Sanai Mavindidze is whipping up sundaes, smoothies and Italian ice slushies for customers.

She's at the helm, surrounded by heaps of sweetness. Everything you'd need to fall deep into a full-fledged sugar coma. Hot fudge. Caramel. Whipped Cream. Oreos. And of course, their signature frozen custard.

Good enough that people will pay double to get it delivered through DoorDash.

"I don't know why people do that," Mavindidze playfully remarks. "So lazy."

She's a senior at Pike High School, working full time because she chose to attend school virtually this year. After a lifetime of being told when to wake up and go to class and come back home, she's now the boss of her own schedule.

"I feel a lot more independent," Mavindidze said.

She doesn't miss high school, she said.

Work gives her the chance to save money for a car and hang out with other teen coworkers. She'll still dance at prom with her boyfriend, whose initial 'D' she wears on a necklace. She'll still walk at graduation before attending Ball State University next fall.

"I always said that I wouldn't go to college in Indiana," Mavindidze said. "But right now I'm just not ready to leave."

The job can get stressful with long lines and (sometimes) not-so-nice customers, Mavindidze said, but then she remembers. She's in charge.

"I realized, if I'm the only person here, I'm not about to let y'all stress me out," Mavindidze said.

A ring interrupts her, prompting her attention.

"Welcome to Ritter's. Order when you're ready," she said calmly into the headset.

She listened but didn't write anything down. *"OK, go ahead and pull around."*

"So now, it's just kind of like going with the flow," Mavindidze said. "We get through it."

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