

A slice of history

The story of Marzella's and its close relationship with Ursinus College

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Marzella's Pizza is an iconic landmark in Collegeville, PA. At one time or another, almost every Ursinus student has grabbed a slice from the local pizzeria located adjacent to Commonwealth Hall.

Founded by Frannie and Maureen Marzella at a different location in Collegeville, Marzella's was the first pizza shop in the borough.

After many years at its former location, Frannie Marzella decided to move the restaurant to the current location. It was at this location where Jack Komorowski, the current owner, found his passion for pizza and specifically, Marzella's.

In the 1970s, Komorowski was just a young man growing up in Lafayette Hill, PA. He decided to join a local softball team in the Collegeville area that was sponsored by Marzella's Pizza.

"After every game we would come to Marzella's and celebrate," he said. "One day, Frannie asked me if I wanted to learn how to make a pizza and I loved it. Eventually, I began working weekends, and ever since I have been coming in."

In 2010, Komorowski bought the rights to Marzella's Pizza. He said that he and his wife, Linda, wanted to serve the best pizza and sandwiches while creating a clean and inviting environment.

To do this, Komorowski decided to renovate the restaurant in early 2013 to attract more customers. But this wasn't the only idea that Komorowski had in mind to improve Marzella's.

He had another idea that was solely due to the experiences of his children, who attended college at Penn State University. That idea was dollar slices.

"My kids told me that whenever there was dollar slices at the local pizzerias in State College, there would be lines out the door," he said. "I knew that this would be a hit here at Ursinus, so I decided to give it a try and see if it attracted more students."

Komorowski has noted dollar slices as being a huge success for the restaurant, especially for students looking to save money.

The lines out the door that Komorowski's children had remembered eventually did occur at Marzella's, but ironically enough, it was not due to dollar slices. It was due to the norovirus outbreak that hit Ursinus in February.

"I remember that Wednesday so vividly," said Jack. "I had never seen my place so crowded. The line was out the door and down the road with the dining room completely packed. Since it was a Wednesday, we only had three people working. I had to call in back up when the lines were getting unbearable. That day was crazy."

With its location so close to Ursinus' campus, Marzella's has established a close relationship with the college. In fact, Ursinus actually owns Marzella's property. Komorowski owns the business and leases the space from the school. He recently signed a four-year extension to the property.

"Ursinus has been great to us. We love being able to serve the students. I'd say that Ursinus students are approximately 25 percent of our customer base and we intend to keep it that way for years to come," he said.

While Marzella's is noted for its pizza, it has expanded its menu since Komorowski took over the business in 2010.

He has added a variety of sandwiches to the menu, specifically his all-time favorite, the pork sandwich.

"No one knows that we actually use almost the same meats as Primo's hoagies. However, we get all of our bread from a bakery in Norristown and we pay top dollar for our provolone cheese shipped from New York City. It is this quality that has kept the customers happy for all of these years," said Komorowski.

Komorowski and his wife are looking forward to continued success for Marzella's Pizza. He even has a couple of new ideas up

See **Pizza** on pg. 5



Photo courtesy of Olivia Keithley
Olivia Keithley '16 has spent the past year working on an honors project to improve K-12 education. She's also a member of the Student Diversity Committee, a Tour Guide, and Secretary of the Class of 2016.

An 'Honorable' mention

Ursinus senior's honors project examines benefits of a liberal arts education in grades K-12

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"I have so many books that they don't all fit in my bookbag," Olivia Keithley said, laughing.

The senior politics and peace and social justice studies major was referring to the many sources she has spent months compiling for her honors paper.

Keithley also has a minor in education, which was part of her inspiration for her honors research.

As a student in Dr. Stephanie Mackler's philosophy of liberal arts education class during her junior year, Keithley became interested in the impact of teaching and learning the liberal arts.

Her project seeks to discuss

why the K-12 public education system should follow a liberal arts model.

"It's kind of a philosophical argument," said Keithley. "It's looking at something that has really historically been in higher education, and how it can be, why it should be brought into the K-12 classroom."

Keithley says she has always known that she wanted to go into education, eventually deciding on the world of education policy.

"I really wanted to go into education reform in public schools; public schools are really important to me," Keithley said.

Though the education department at Ursinus is small, with only three full-time professors, Keithley praised the department's

merits. As an education minor who is not on the teacher track, she said, "I've been really lucky here. I've been able to take a lot of education special topics classes in different interest areas."

Keithley is co-advised by Dr. Mackler and Dr. Seamus Mulryan.

Though Dr. Mackler is on sabbatical this semester, Keithley worked closely with her last semester.

She began writing the paper this semester, and Dr. Mulryan has been advising her through that process.

"While Keithley's project is

See **Honors** on pg. 5