

Best Way Pizza still “hip to be square”

In a country crying for ways to somehow get people to drop their political differences and look for ways to feel some sense of alignment, the answer might be simple. The answer might be pizza.

Craig LeCrone would be hard-pressed to disagree with that. He has been tied to the pizza business in one way or another for the past 41 years. As current president of Best Way Pizza in Hollidaysburg, LeCrone has witnessed the happy faces that come together from all sides of the diversity spectrum. Pizza is clearly a catalyst that helps people tuck-away their animosities.

Best Way Pizza’s history is tied to a layoff at the Pennsylvania Railroad. Gene Caparella, a railroad worker was furloughed in 1955 and he started making and selling pizza to make ends meet. He ended-up selling the business to Craig LeCrone’s dad who

understood the potential for growth and the advantages of franchising.

“My dad’s strategy for the company was simple and hasn’t changed from the beginning,” LeCrone admitted. “Offer a consistent product for a good value, have clean stores, put smiling faces behind the counter and always treat every customer like you would want to be treated. He drilled that into our heads from day one.”

There are currently fourteen locations – one corporate and thirteen franchises. “Most of the franchise locations are owned by families that have been involved with us for more than 25 years,” LeCrone acknowledged. “Some started with us when they were teenagers. It’s a great group and I love working with them.”

As everyone in Blair County knows, Best Way Pizza “dares to be square.” It’s been that way from the



beginning. “I tell people that we are more like a fast food restaurant that serves pizza rather than a traditional pizza shop that only serves pies,” LeCrone explains. “Central Pennsylvania is familiar with pizza-by-the-cut but many other places haven’t heard of selling pizza this way.

“I’ve gotten some pretty weird reactions trying to explain to people that we only sell square pizza with one slice of pepperoni.”

Like most restaurants, Best Way Pizza was impacted by Covid-19 but managed to weather it and even learned some valuable



Nikki Mowery and Jesse Wagner, two of the managers at Best Way Pizza in Hollidaysburg, prepare an order for pick-up.

lessons in the process.

“We’ve had some struggles getting products but have found some good substitutions and our suppliers have been helpful,” LeCrone disclosed. “We’ve always

had high regard for our employees but Covid showed us just how blessed we are when it comes to our team members. At some point we expected to have to modify our hours due to

losing staff but that never happened. I’m very proud of our people.”

(Best Way Pizza has been a Blair County Chamber of Commerce member since 2011.)

Non-profit workshop to address importance of board development



Dr. Patricia Savage, President/CEO of Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries has been a frequent speaker on Board Development issues.

Of all of the aspects of building and maintaining a non-profit business, one that seldom gets its due is Board Development. All too often when it does occur, it’s because something went wrong and needs to be fixed.

“At our Non-profit Symposium a couple months ago, Board Development was hardly mentioned although there was significant discussion about issues that arise due to lack of board orientation,” remarked Chamber President Joe Hurd. “It’s clearly a matter of committing the time and the energy to take care of the things that can come back to bite you.”

To get the process started, the Chamber’s Committee of Non-profit Businesses will hold a

Best Practices Forum this Friday, June 3rd, from 8:15 to 9:45 a.m. at the Devorris Center for Business Development. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Patricia Savage, President/CEO of Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries. Her presentation is entitled, “Some Basics of Governance Practices.” Assisting her will be Tommi Burchfield, Partnership Manager of Personal Care Medical Associates.

The cost to attend the Forum will be \$10 for Chamber members and \$20 for non-members. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blair-chamber.com. Corporate sponsor of the Best Practices is CONTACT Altoona.

Leadership an ongoing priority for Tornatore’s

As COO at Keystone Environmental, Health & Safety Services in Altoona, Darin Tornatore has always been a strong proponent of self-improvement. So when Judy Juda and Chuck Kormanski of the Chamber’s Leadership Blair County program suggested that he apply to be part of the Class of 2005, Darin never hesitated. It was the first step in what has become an impressive family affair.

“I had heard so many positive things about LBC that it made sense from a personal and professional standpoint to pursue it,” he acknowledged. “Leadership is something that successful businesses sometimes take for granted. I wasn’t about to.”

By the time he graduated from LBC, Darin was a true believer. He not only wanted to exercise his role as a servant leader, he wanted to encourage others to apply for the program. To accomplish the latter, as it turns out, he didn’t need to leave the house.

Nineteen years ago, the Chamber created Leadership Blair County Youth, a program similar to the adult one but for high school sophomores interested in taking leadership responsibilities at their local high schools. On May 11th, Miranda Tornatore – Darin’s daughter – graduated from LBC Youth. She was his third child to do so. His sons, Dominic and Andrew graduated in 2017 and 2019.

“Since my own class and



Andrew (left), Dominic and Miranda (right) Tornatore have followed their father Darin’s lead by becoming LBC Youth graduates. Darin graduated from LBC Adult in 2005.

all adult classes had a combined, interactive session with the youth class each year, I knew my children would benefit from the program, just from that session alone,” Darin admitted. “My wife Dana and I both encouraged all of them to apply but we didn’t push. In retrospect, I believe they applied because they were truly interested in becoming young servant leaders.”

He was pretty much on the mark.

“When I was a sophomore in high school, I never had leadership classes or any exposure to that sort of education,” Dominic pointed out.

“So when my dad recommended the LBCY program and stated that he was a

graduate of the adult program, I was all-in. I look up to my father. From seeing how leadership played a role in his career development, it made sense for me to follow a similar path. The LBC program has been a great stepping stone.”

His brother agreed. “Learning leadership skills has been important in so many ways,” Andrew disclosed. “But learning to be a servant leader takes the additional step of helping you to understand the keys of living and fulfilling a meaningful life. It’s something that you don’t always realize until later.”

For Miranda, LBC was an experience with many components.

“During the program, we really didn’t discuss being

a leader as much,” she explained. “What we do discuss is how to become one. We talked about things like diversity which is super-important to becoming a leader. We visited places in our community that need volunteer help. And we learned skills like public speaking which helped me to overcome my fears, be engaging and be enthusiastic. That will benefit me the rest of my life.”

With four LBC grads, the Tornatore’s trail only the Miller’s (Bobbie, Dave, Jamie, Derrick and Jason). Time for Dana Tornatore to tie things up?

“I’d love to see her apply,” Darin noted. “I believe she’d benefit from Leadership Blair County, as we all have.”

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