

BACK MOUNTAIN BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: GROTTO PIZZA

# Grotto Pizza a 'hub for the community'

By LIZ BAUMEISTER  
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What began at Harveys Lake in 1953 as a small seasonal restaurant called Joe's Pizza has evolved into a multi-location business with three restaurants in Northeast Pennsylvania and several more out of state.

Known as Grotto Pizza since 1960, the restaurant continues to thrive in and for its local community.

Tony DeCosmo, Director of Marketing, describes the business as "a hub for the community" where people gather for meetings, fundraisers and special events. For example, he said, for the past 17 years, it hosted a "Parade of Trees" fundraisers, which has raised almost \$150,000 for various charities since the first year.

The business supports many community organizations, according to owner Armand Mascioli, such as the F.M. Kirby Center, Luzerne County Community College's Joseph A. Paglianite Culinary Institute (named after Mascioli's uncle and Grotto Pizza founder), children's sports, Catholic schools, the local fire department and more.

It recently launched a new program, Community Fund-raiser Nights, which allows non-profit organizations to raise

funds through the restaurant. The restaurant is also deeply rooted in the community through its multi-generations of workers and loyal customers of many years.

"It is a retail food service where you're directly serving your customers," said Mascioli, explaining what he enjoys most about running Grotto Pizza. "You kind of get it into your blood in this business because it's people-oriented."

**MEET THE OWNER: ARMAND MASCIOLI**

**Favorite items on the menu:** Spaghetti with meatballs, lasagna, cheesesteaks, wings and Angus burgers  
**Pizza topping:** Pepperoni  
**Best thing to watch on TV while eating pizza:** Sports  
**Sports teams:** Philadelphia Eagles and New York Yankees  
**Hobbies:** Golf and boating

He added that the work often involves long hours that are always worth it because of the large customer base.

"The real key for us is that we've been around since 1953," Mascioli said. "We have a very loyal extended base of customers. Some of them travel for

many miles to get here." He said one aspect which makes the restaurant unique is the size, accomodating up to 650 people with a full range of services: private dining, outdoor deck, sports bar, private catering, take-out and delivery. He added the restaurant strives to offer the highest quality and freshest ingredients, sticking with its traditional recipes, while still keeping current with the menu.

"You never forget what you're good at," he said. "We're really good at our pizza product."



Owner Armand Mascioli, left, and Director of Marketing Tony DeCosmo are shown in the kitchen at Grotto Pizza, Harveys Lake.



Originally called Joe's Pizza, Grotto Pizza, with three locations in Pennsylvania and several out of state, began in 1953 at Harveys Lake. After the original building burned down, the current one was built and renamed Grotto Pizza in 1960.



Sarah Stredny slices a pizza that just came out of the oven at Grotto Pizza, Harveys Lake. Stredny has worked at the business for 11 years and is the third generation Grotto Pizza worker from her family. Her grandmother, Janice Bauer, is still employed there on weekends and is in her 35th year.

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