



From a Kernel of an Idea, a Family Business is Born

By Brady Johnson

I FIRST RAN ACROSS “Love Peace Popcorn” on an unseasonably warm January day. The wind was blowing slightly straight up Coleman Blvd. in Frisco Square. Seeing the colorful sign with the fetching logo, I walked into the simple one-room store. The wall to my left was lined with giant holiday tins of popcorn, some of my favorite kinds of candy and a drink machine. To the right was a shelf full of Dallas Cowboy tins. An assortment of other NFL and college teams plastered the wall. Above the cashier was a menu flashing from a flat-screen TV. The most breathtaking sight however was directly in front of me. Behind the counter sat the most beautiful and diverse collection of fresh popcorn I have ever seen.

Meet the Paparellas, owners of “Love Peace Popcorn.” The store sells, as the name suggests, popcorn--and lots of it. “We use the best ingredients and we make everything here!” said Gary Paparella. This is an impressive feat considering how expansive the menu is at this mom-and-pop shop. Gary and his wife Liza, who works full-time before reporting for duty at the popcorn shop each evening, create popcorn in a variety of 42 flavors. Of course, there’s the typical cheddar

cheese or the usual caramel covered popcorn. But one can also find flavors such as s’mores, wasabi, Texas jalapeno and even pizza popcorn. As a part of our interview, it only seemed right that I try out the popcorn. Mr. Paparella was happy to oblige. Unbeknownst to him, he was serving one of the pickiest eaters around: me. I am adverse to any and all flavors outside of a very narrow range of red meats, potatoes and sugar. But Mr. Paparella offered me one of the shop’s most peculiar and popular flavors, Dill Pickle, and I loved it. He explained that some of the more off-beat flavors pique the curiosity of customers. When people try them though, as I found out first-hand, they want to buy whole tins of them.

The Paparellas moved to Frisco from Pittsburgh in 2006 and immediately felt at home. Not long after arriving, Mr. Paparella left the job that brought him here. With both of their daughters in college at the time, they could have easily returned to Pittsburgh. Instead, they stayed and he says he’s glad he did. “I spent my whole life in Pittsburgh. But Frisco is a growing area, and it seems like the place to be. We love it!” With an opportunity to pursue any career in the world what did he and

his wife choose? Popcorn.

“My niece and nephew own a popcorn store. That’s where the idea came from,” Mr. Paparella explained. So in May of 2008, he and his younger daughter Maegan began doodling on napkins in a restaurant trying to come up with names and logos. It was through that process that Maegan, a student at Kent State, came up with the name “Love Peace Popcorn,” and the logo showing a heart, peace sign and a piece of popcorn above each word respectively. By June, he had begun planning the business side of the operation. One of the first orders of business was to decide where to plant this new endeavor. They could have gone anywhere, but it was their older daughter Natalie who pointed out the obvious: they were already living in the prime location for the launch of their dream. Feeling they were clearly in the right spot, they then hired a consultant to teach them everything they needed to know about the popcorn business. Once they knew the business backward and forward, the Paparellas took the plunge.

“We believed in the Frisco area so much that we put all of our own money into this.” With their finances in order,



*The Paparella family (left);
Interior panorama of Love, Peace, Popcorn
photos by Chris Fritchie*

their minds full of kernel knowledge, and a couple of ingenious tricks up their sleeves, they opened the doors on November 28, 2008, just six months after the idea was conceived.

“The first month was very successful. We had more business than we had anticipated and did better than we had projected. We would like to thank the people of Frisco for their support,” said the enthusiastic owner.

Since this issue of Frisco STYLE is devoted to the city’s economic development, I should point out there is much to be gained when families or individuals start their own businesses around town. A study by Civic Economics in Austin found that when \$100 is spent at a family-owned and operated business, \$45 stays in the community. Spending the same amount at a franchise however, leaves only \$13 circulating locally. So if you have a dream you want to plant, follow the shining example of the Paparellas. Frisco owes its authentic, hometown feel to its local entrepreneurs who make family, friends and fellow Frisco residents their top priority.

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