

BUSINESS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT— AUGUST 2007

Pizza Factory Owner Supports Farmers, Community

by Amy Roberts

Long before Troy VanVelson purchased the Pizza Factory in Corcoran, he understood its philosophy of providing customers with great food.

As a boy, growing up in Oakhurst, he enjoyed eating at the first Pizza Factory, which opened in 1979.

“I got my first job there in 1987 as a dishwasher,” he said, adding he was 14 and went to school with the owner’s daughter.

After graduating from high school, VanVelson left the mountain community to attend the University of California Santa Barbara. While there, he heard from his first boss that the Corcoran Pizza Factory was for sale. Knowing its potential, VanVelson quickly decided to buy it despite not knowing the area.

However any concerns were quickly dispelled by the warm reception people gave him.

“The community has been wonderful and very welcoming to me,” he said about starting his new life in Corcoran.

The first few years I devoted most of my time to the business, he said.

By 2001 VanVelson married and brought his new wife to Corcoran. They are now the proud parents of two daughters. “Everything here as been a positive experience – it’s really been a great place for us to live.”

VanVelson also enjoys giving back to the community. He is a Rotarian, serves on the Board of the Corcoran Community Foundation and is a tennis coach at the high school. He often sponsors raffle tickets, which includes a discount pizza coupon on each one. VanVelson also advertises in the Corcoran Journal where each month he rotates one of 10 different discount coupons.

Since taking over the business in 1998, VanVelson has steadily increased sales to where he has doubled the number of employees he needs to fully staff it.

Schools, he said, comprise a large part of his business.

When asked what topping students prefer, VanVelson didn’t hesitate in saying pepperoni. “If I’m asked that’s what I recommend,” he said of school orders.

Pizza Factory franchises traditionally go into towns of 40,000 or less, but that is starting to change, VanVelson said, adding each business is individually owned and most owners work in them. Today there are over 140 restaurants in ten western states, according to the com-



Troy VanVelson hand tosses dough at Pizza Factory.

pany Website.

“There are some things as a franchisee I can’t put on the menu, but if we have the ingredients we can make it,” he said.

Besides pizza, Pizza Factory offers a range of menu items including pastas, salads and sandwiches. Sauces and dough is all made from scratch from company recipes to maintain quality. VanVelson’s restaurant has a separate room that holds 50 people for parties and meetings. He welcomes call in orders and offers delivery for a nominal fee.

VanVelson joined Kings County Farm Bureau as a supporting business member after realizing how important the industry is.

“The community is based on agriculture – something I didn’t know much about until I moved here,” he said. “Many of my friends work for Boswells or farm and I think the business of agriculture is something all people should understand. I am amazed at how technologically advanced farming is now and I’m glad I took the time to learn about it and am truly amazed at what ag does.”

BUSINESS STATS

Owner:	Troy VanVelson
Address:	1117 Whitley Avenue, Corcoran
Phone:	992-3148
Hours:	Sun. thru Thurs. 10 am to 10 pm.; Fri. & Sat. open until 11 pm
Website:	www.pizzafactory.com