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## **New businesses and owners celebrate openings in Warwick - by Frank Picozzi**

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Frank Picozzi

Last month, I had the pleasure of sharing with you information about several large land development projects underway in the city – from residential developments, to a new hotel, to a new Dunkin’ Donuts and construction of a gas station/convenience store that will transform under- and unutilized parcels – but that’s not to say that we haven’t also been welcoming new ventures and business owners to Warwick in the meantime.

For nearly 40 years, Don’s Pizza, at the corner of Church and Warwick Aves., has been a fixture in our community, where owner Donald Ryan has treated employees and customers alike as family. From its inception, Don cultivated a business that quickly earned a stellar reputation for delicious food, great service, a friendly atmosphere and long-standing community involvement, sponsoring scores of athletic teams over the years. Unfortunately, recent health issues led to Don’s difficult decision to close up shop, unless he could find a buyer who would continue his proud traditions. He found that in employee Ashley Sullivan, who began working for him at the age of 16, and, 11 years later, was still there. We were thrilled to join her and her business partner Jason Angilly for a grand re-opening celebration, and look forward to their success as they carry on the business – using the same recipes that have been a staple in Don’s kitchen for decades.

Across the city on Warwick Neck Ave., it’s also a family affair and a labor of love at Presto Strange O Café, where Jay and Jessica Case are seeing their dream of owning a café become a reality. For more than a decade, they’ve operated out of a coffee/food truck, hoping one day to find the perfect spot for a coffee shop. They found it right in their own neighborhood, when a building that housed a dog grooming business and a hair salon went up for sale. In the short time since they’ve opened, Presto Strange O has become a popular gathering spot for locals who enjoy a variety of unique coffees, teas and other beverages, as well as a variety of homemade treats like apple fritters, specialty cookies, and the Warwick Neck Chicken Salad Sandwich, as they relax in the comfortable atmosphere the Cases have created.

Warwick is also home to a number of non-profit organizations that do terrific and valuable work to

benefit and support some of the most vulnerable in our community. We're very proud to welcome Amenity Aid to their ranks. Founded by Liz Duggan in 2013, the organization, now located at 55 Jefferson Blvd., acquires essential toiletries and distributes them to Rhode Islanders in need via a network of agencies, such as veteran groups, homeless shelters, domestic violence agencies, food pantries, and other organizations throughout the state that provide direct services to those in need. Last year, Amenity Aid collaborated with 21 non-profit groups. From January to June of this year, they distributed 38,781 hygiene products, resulting in 24,098 people receiving essentials like toothpaste, body soap, lotion, shaving cream, deodorant, and shampoo. The organization accepts monetary donations as well as donations of toiletries and hotel amenities. The latter helped to inspire the non-profit's name; Ms. Duggan was a frequent business traveler who donated hotel amenities to local shelters, and learned of the continual demand and need for supplies.

As the summer fades into fall, we'll have additional updates and news on exciting new projects to share. In the meantime, I hope you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy.

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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