

Behind The Scenes: Joe Demott

■ By Mike McKibbin

Joe Demott knows a lot of people in Wheat Ridge. And vice versa. But not everyone knows what he does for the community, mostly out of the public eye.

A Wheat Ridge native, DeMott attended local schools and graduated from Wheat Ridge High School in 1990.

"I grew up here, got married and had kids here," DeMott said. "I knew Wheat Ridge was different, a more welcoming community, and not just because of my parents or their business."

DeMott's father, Paul, started Pietra's Pizzeria & Italian Restaurant, 9045 W. 44th Ave., in 1964, then added Garramone's Italian Restaurant in Lakewood in 1971 and Randi's Pizza in Arvada in 1976. DeMott is now the owner of Pietra's and a partner in Clancy's Irish Pub, 7000 W. 38th Ave.

DeMott's community involvement record is a long one:

- Following the shutdown of the Wheat Ridge Chamber of Commerce in the 1990s, DeMott helped reestablish the organization and serves as its chairman.
- He served as Carnation Festival board chair and festival manager for nearly the last 10 years. The event raises money for service clubs and schools in Wheat Ridge. DeMott said the Carnation Festival is a lot of work and other board members have served longer terms.

"It benefits around 17 organizations that are doing great work in the community," he added.

- He is president of the Wheat Ridge Business District. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization offers matching funds to businesses in the city who want to improve the appearance of



RESTAURATEUR JOE DEMOTT HAS SERVED AS CARNATION FESTIVAL

board chair and manager for nearly the last 10 years. It is one of several behind-the-scenes volunteer efforts DeMott has supported as a way to give back to the community. *PHOTO: COURTESY JOE DEMOTT*

their buildings.

"I saw this person and that person on this board and that board and that kind of sparked my interest," DeMott said. "It seemed like a good way to stay involved and help make sure Wheat Ridge remains a great community for my kids and everyone else's."

DeMott said his father was also involved in the community, and doing so as a business

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owner is important, "Or you often don't stay in business."

DeMott, along with his sisters, all chose careers in the service industry and started the \$1,000 DeMott Family Scholarship. It is awarded annually through the Wheat Ridge Community Foundation to a Wheat Ridge High School senior seeking a career in the food service/hotel management industry.

Noting how much the industry suffered economically during the COVID-19 virus business shutdown last year, DeMott said, "It's refreshing to still have some interest from kids who want to work at a restaurant or hotel or whatever."

Since the coronavirus pandemic arrived in early 2020, DeMott helped the chamber

work with the city to make businesses aware of grants and other financial help. He was also able to avoid laying off any of the approximately 50 employees who work at Pietra's and Clancy's.

"In fact, we were able to pay them a little more than minimum wage," DeMott added.

Waitresses delivered pizzas and other food during the year.

"They surprised several people when they showed up," he stated.

As the virus started to ease up later in the year, DeMott sponsored a few nighttime outdoor drive-in movies at Pietra's.

"They weren't money makers but it was a chance to help people get outside," he said.

A holiday craft fair was also held toward the end of the year.

"There was a lot of adapting for everyone this past year," DeMott added.

In more public roles, DeMott was a city

council member from 2009 to 2013, ran for mayor in 2017 and Colorado House District 24. He said while he doesn't have any immediate political plans, he is not "totally out of the loop."

"I deal with the city almost daily as a business owner," DeMott stated.

He noted many city employees stay for many years, which benefits the city in terms of institutional knowledge.

"That says a lot about a city," DeMott added. "And I think it definitely helps make for a better environment."

DeMott does not volunteer his time for personal awareness or to win awards.

"Things like the business district aren't too exciting, but when a business wants to improve their building, we're there," he said. "Many people probably don't even know we exist."

DeMott said the district helped fund a new sign for Clancy's, and a future facade project

at Pietra's might involve the district. Other district board members have also received help for similar projects, he added.

Many people are surprised when they find out how involved DeMott is in the community.

"I know so many people who are regular customers and from living here my entire life," he said. "Once they hear I'm on this board or that board, I tell them I can help get them involved, too."

Doing little things that can lead people to get involved is part of the advice DeMott gives to those thinking about helping a community.

"The things I'm involved in are the ones that give me more purpose and they're things I like to do," DeMott said. "I tell them to just do something, get involved. Even the smallest things can make a big difference to someone. And just listen to people. I'm 50 years old and I'm always learning something new."