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Behind The Scenes: Mark Eskow | Neighborhood Gazette

by Mike McKibbin | June 20, 2021

Mark Eskow likes it when people get together and come up with great ideas. That's why Eskow started opening his business, Right Coast Pizza, early in the mornings years ago, long before Wheat Ridge had any coffee houses. Local clubs and community members gathered to talk issues and ideas and enjoy free coffee.

"I just think it's rewarding when people gather and talk about ideas," he said. "That's how you get some cool things going. I don't engage very much online because I don't think it lends itself to good creativeness. I think we need to connect in person and that helps open all kinds of doors. So I've always been open to holding meetings here."

Eskow has owned and operated Right Coast Pizza, 7100 W. 38th Ave., for nearly 10 years. He came to Colorado after he graduated from high school in New Jersey and ended up in Steamboat Springs "to be a ski bum," he said. Eskow started taking some college classes and eventually enrolled at the University of Colorado in Boulder. During visits to Denver, he found he enjoyed smaller communities in the metro area, like Wheat Ridge.

More People = Business Growth

One topic Eskow would like to see more attention focused on is how to

increase the use of the green space on 38th Avenue. “As a community grows and changes, how those areas are used changes,” he said. Eskow took part in the city’s 38th Avenue redesign project about a decade ago.

“38th has always been seen as one of Wheat Ridge’s main streets, but the challenge for businesses has been how to bring people here,” he said. “It’s hard for us to compete with places like Sloan’s Lake or downtown Denver, where they have more room and more things going on that draws people in. I’m not sure what we might do about that, but I’d like to help keep the interest growing. I’m really excited for this summer and to see what kind of foot traffic we get on 38th.” Eskow believes people will become more comfortable with in-person conversations and meetings as more people get vaccinated against the coronavirus. “The past year was kind of like a vacation but not really,” he said. “The stress was always there. We stayed open, though, and now it seems we’re getting busier every day.”

Eskow did not lay off any of his employees, although “it was hard to provide 30-40 hours, and we could only offer carry-out,” he said. “But the community support was great.” Eskow is now waiting for a city permit so he can add an outdoor patio with heaters for outside dining. Other businesses on 38th have improvement plans, too, he added.

More community events could be a key to bringing more people to the area, Eskow said. He added the city needs more growth to help small businesses like his. “Starting a business, you become a big part of a community,” Eskow said. “There are a lot of great people in Wheat Ridge and I’d like to help them get together and run with it. I’d love to see more investment and defined areas where people could easily identify something as Wheat Ridge, where they could say ‘this is Wheat Ridge’.”

Local Schools Helped

Despite his civic interests, Eskow is not involved with groups like the chamber of commerce or others, just to keep from stretching himself too thin. However – now married with a daughter – local schools have been among Eskow’s other community help endeavors. “If any of the local (parent-teacher organizations) come up with a good idea, I’m open to helping and we can chat about it,” he said.

Eskow has helped raise funds through donations of 20 percent of a day’s proceeds from Right Coast, and he participated in Wheat Ridge High School’s art-on-the-wall community mural project by agreeing to allow students to design a mural and paint it on an outside wall of Right Coast. He also talks to people at Localworks, a nonprofit organization formerly known as Wheat Ridge 2020 that works to improve the city, about ideas and interests.

“I think any business owner in Wheat Ridge would echo what I’m saying,” Eskow said. “We really can’t see enough investment between Wadsworth and Sheridan (boulevards), and improvements on 38th, I think, would be huge and inviting. Wheat Ridge needs to be more attractive for businesses to come here. I don’t have all the answers, but I’m open to talking about it.” The coffee’s still free, too.

Editor’s note: The Neighborhood Gazette welcomes suggestions for our Behind The Scenes community profiles. Email names, contact information and why you think someone contributes to improving Wheat Ridge’s quality of life through volunteer efforts or giving their time, skills and knowledge, to editor@ngazette.com.