

The Chariho Times

Sausages link couple to success

By ERIC WHITE

CHARLESTOWN — Two kids. Two stores. Too much?

Not for Charlestown residents Paul and Patti Stannard, owners of Fortuna's Italian Deli & Caterers in Westerly and Fortuna's Sausage Co. in Greenville.

The couple makes a living out of making countless varieties of sausage, pepperoni and salami. Their most famous creation is a form of soppressata sausage, nicknamed the "soupy," which has no preservatives.

Their meats are not made in a factory, or bought from a retailer. They are made right here in Little Rhody. Made the same way they were 2,000 years ago in Italy.

"It's not mass-produced," Paul, 36, said in his Greenville store. "It's done like people used to do it."

Patti and Paul pride themselves on the way they make their meats. Especially the fact they use no preservatives and their products are made with ingredients people can pronounce.

Paul works on production, making the sausage, salami and pepperoni. Patti, 34, works the front with customer relations and setting up mail orders.

"I don't mind getting down and dirty and getting the job done," Paul said of his hands-on work.

Fortuna's uses UPS to ship their products all over the country. That part of the business, say the couple, is growing. The Greenville store is a new addition to the Fortuna family. Paul said mail orders are 20 percent of the business.

Busy, busy, busy

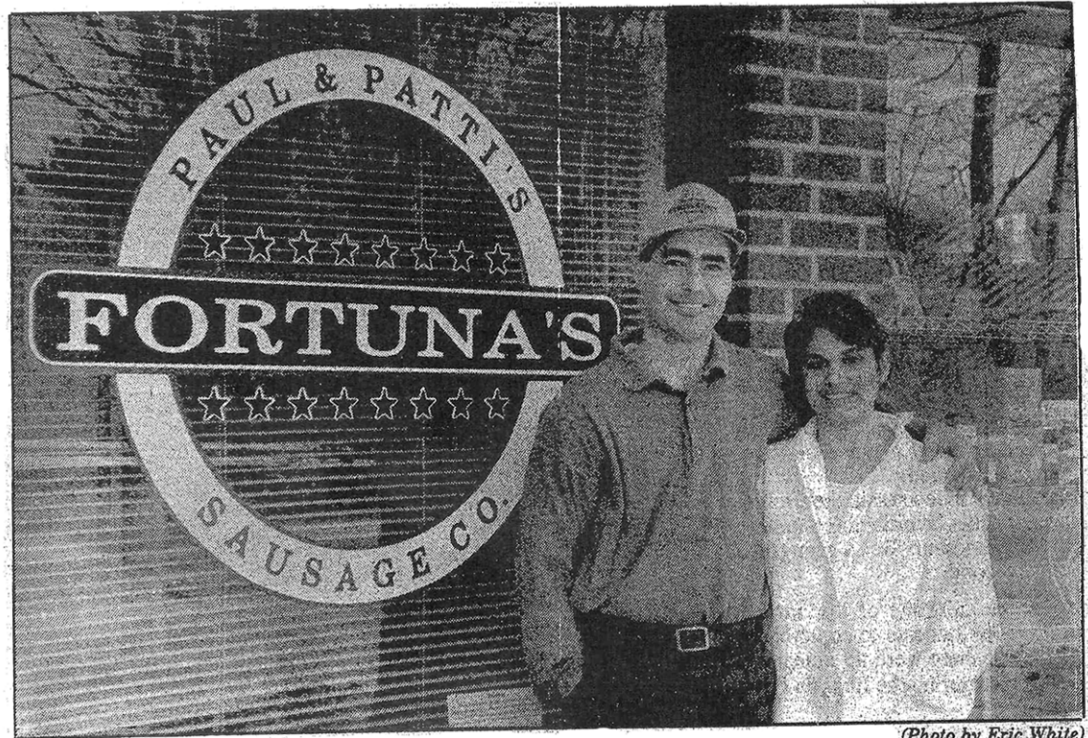
The business has been busy lately, especially with the Greenville store, which has been open since January.

The couple gets up between 4:30 a.m. and 5 a.m. daily.

"Very rarely do we ever carpool," said Paul.

They take turns getting their kids, Chris, 13, and Amy, 5, off to school. And one of them leaves work early to be there when they come home.

"With a new business, it's very hard to get time off," Paul said. "We're maxed-out. This year, we don't know what's going to happen."



(Photo by Eric White)

SUPER SAUSAGE: Patti and Paul Stannard of Charlestown stand in front of their sausage, pep-

peroni and salami production store in Greenville.

But they prefer to be hands-on. "We have to do it all," Patti said. "It's our baby."

While the couple has a hand in every aspect of their business, they're not totally alone.

Managers Eric Johnson and Jenn Leo put in 50 plus hours at the Westerly store to free up Patti and Paul for the Greenville store.

For the past two months, the couple has been working seven days a week, putting in time at the Westerly store and Greenville. Sunday is the short day, when one of them works 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., while the other gets a chance to relax at home.

The company got a national boost when Kathie Jenkins, Food Editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, gave Fortuna's a good write up.

That review gained the interest of *Tonight Show* host Jay Leno, whose wife Mavis called to place an order. Leno also called.

"We thought that it was a prank," Paul said.

"It sounded just like one of Paul's

friend's," Patti added.

But it wasn't. And there was proof. Paul sent Leno a motorcycle business card with the sausage. He told nobody about it. When Leno said he liked the card, Paul knew he was on the phone with the man himself.

Paul, who collects and restores dirt motorcycles, and Leno, also an avid motorcycle fan, talked for about a half hour.

He even invited the couple to see a show when it comes to New York in May.

Patti and Paul hope their kids will run the business someday.

Chris works for his parents, and won a contest to name a brand of pepperoni his father makes.

The winning name: Provoloni Pepperoni.

For that, Chris won the CD of his choice.

With all the work Patti and Paul put into their business, it's not surprising they met while working at it.

Fortuna is Patti's maiden name. She met Paul when he came into her

parent's Westport, Conn. store. They were married in 1976. Fortuna's has been a part of the couple's life for as long as they've been together. They talk business most of the time.

Two businesses and two kids may seem like too much to the average person.

But the Stannard's would have it no other way.

After all, the business is their baby.