



SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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The ASL Workshop: How One Online Platform is Bridging the Gap Between the Hearing and Deaf Communities

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Change is happening one conversation at a time and it's all thanks to a local woman who had aspirations for a cause bigger than herself.

Jasmine Beltran is the founder of The ASL Workshop, an one-on-one tutoring program focusing on deaf awareness and advocacy. Beltran started the online classes after numerous inquiries from interested parties wanting to better communicate with members of the deaf community.

"A lot of my clients are beginner learners so it's a lot of watching videos and talking about deaf etiquette, what it would look like to make an environment deaf-friendly," said Beltran. "We also go over beginner phrases, the deaf alphabet, numbers, and I teach people the different dialects of sign language because it may look different when talking to a person from Iraq, or Asia, or California."

The sessions are 60-minutes long where Beltran allows her clients to pause and review material or request follow-up videos that can be studied after class. Each session is customized to fit the specific needs of the client. Beltran highlights focused language and verbiage that will be most beneficial to the customer.

"The content is relevant to whatever their lives are like. A lot of clients are teachers, or nurses, or dental hygienists, or parents of deaf children so I try to form the session around their individual situation even if they are beginner learners," said Beltran.

Only having been in business for close to a year, The ASL Workshop is seeing tremendous growth with

clients from various areas across the country. Many of Beltran's clients are individuals who have had encounters with people in the deaf community and wish to better communicate with them.

As an able-hearing child of two deaf parents, Beltran says creating the ASL Workshop was sparked from a personal desire to influence a more inclusive and accepting environment for all.

"I notice a lot of the stereotypes or misconceptions that are out there about the deaf community and sign language," said Beltran. "Growing up, it was hard to maintain confidence or pride about being a part of a different linguistic culture and I wanted to change that atmosphere and bridge the gap between the hearing and deaf communities."

Since starting the workshop in July, Beltran says her sessions have confirmed her knowledge on the disparities and lack of information shared between hearing-impaired individuals and their counterparts.

"Some people who know that there are different dialects, but they don't know that ASL itself isn't universal or that a lot of misconceptions come from not being around many deaf people," said Beltran. "Me being that resource for my clients has helped them become more comfortable to ask questions that they might think are offensive or rude, but for me it's about creating a safe space for them so they can get the proper education and share it with their network."

With expansion on the horizon, the ASL Workshop is sure to fulfill its mission of bringing community members from all walks of life together through supportive and inclusive means.

A Whole New (Cobbler)World: Unique Desserts with a Traditional Twist

Web: www.cobblerworld.com
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The sweet smell of cobbler is enough to leave a lasting impression on anyone. For Terina Hicks, owner of CobblerWorld, it's more than a fond memory - it's the inspiration behind her livelihood and creativity.

"Give me a fruit and I'll make a cobbler out of it," said Hicks while laughing.

Equip to meet the popular demands of it's fans, CobblerWorld and it's creations can be found in three Giant Eagle Market Districts in Shadyside, Waterworks, and Settlers Ridge. Before it's success, the sweet treat was simply an idea sparked by Hicks' time as a young girl.

Hicks, who learned how to bake at the knee of her mother, says she's grateful for the time spent in her childhood home's kitchen.

"I got my love, passion, and skill for baking from my mom at the age of 14," said Hicks. "Every holiday she would make these amazing peach cobbles and I would, absolutely, just devour them. One day, I went to her and asked her to teach me how to make them and I'm so glad she did, not knowing that decades later it would turn into a business."

The love of cobblers and pies is not specific to Hicks. In fact, the business owner says much of the nostalgia she

feels rings true for her clients as well - especially those who have relocated to Pittsburgh and miss the traditional treats they're used to.

"There's no one making and selling cobbler's here and because of that, it's been really well-received," said Hicks. People also really like [my items] because I'm not doing the treats that you see at every other bakery."

For those who have their hearts set on a different kind of treat, there's no need to fear. Patrons can enjoy a variety of pies, cobblers, cakes, cookies and more with a visit to CobblerWorld.

Hicks makes it her mission to share her love of traditional desserts with younger generations as a way of introducing them to new flavors.

"My focus is nostalgic confections because when I first started out I knew that I had to do something to differentiate myself from the rest of the competition," said Hicks. "I do the old-fashioned things that I grew up on like pineapple upside down cakes, sweet potato cheesecake, pecan pies, and I want to share them with the millennials and beyond because they haven't been exposed to them."

While the base of her baked goods business is located at three Pittsburgh markets, cobbler lovers from all corners of the nation can get their hands on Hicks' nostalgic and unique desserts.



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