

# Helping Businesses Grow & Succeed

## News Release



Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **FSBDC at UCF Palm Coast Assists Focaccia: An Authentic Italian Pizza Restaurant**

*Restaurant Opens Thanks to Palm Coast Business Assistance Center*

**Palm Coast** – When it comes to pizza, there's pizza, then there's *authentic Italian pizza*. And thanks to the Florida SBDC at UCF at the Palm Coast Business Assistance Center, the food lovers of Volusia County now have access to just that: authentic Italian pizza made by an expert chef from Rome with genuine Italian ingredients. You might have difficulty pronouncing Focaccia (fo-katt-chia) but you'll never have difficulty saying DELICIOUS! Located at 85 Cypress Point Parkway, you'll enter the restaurant to be greeted by Alexia, the friendliest person you could imagine.

Straight from Rome, Italy, Alexia Tarantino and Dario Carbone visited Florida on vacations numerous times and found their way to Palm Coast. Although they had previously visited many Florida locations to establish their business, they chose Palm Coast as their first choice to bring their pizza concept of a "fast-casual pizzeria to life".

In Rome, 'Pizza al Taglio' (Pizza by the Slice) is an extremely popular way of buying pizza. True to their word and their business strategy, Alexia and Dario only make pizza as "the Romans do"! Focaccia's secret formula is hidden in the making of dough – only Dario makes the dough. Made from high protein flours rich in nutrients, the dough traps gasses while being baked resulting in a light and airy flavor. The entire dough making process is lengthy and is necessary to remove the yeast which often causes bloating and a sleepy feeling with traditional pizza. Focaccia's dough is "vegan friendly" and has no "improvers" added.

Upon entering the restaurant, you need only glance at the colorful presentation of pizzas containing only the freshest of toppings. At Focaccia's, there's no need to agree on which toppings for your pizza – there is a wide variety to choose from! Alexia and Dario insist on using only fresh meats and vegetables; hence, you'll never find pre-packaged meats or vegetables in this restaurant. According to Alexia, "there's no substitute for FRESH". Focaccia also offers a selection of Italian beers and wines that complement their pizzas and sandwiches.

Starting a business is never easy so it's easy to assume that opening a business in Palm Coast while living in Rome, Italy might have its own unique set of challenges. Upon their return to Florida, Dario and Alexia found the Palm Coast Business Assistance Center. Alexia remarked, "Having this resource available was a source of a huge piece of mind for us even if we were on the other side of the world. Working our way through the permitting process and understanding Palm Coast's requirements were simplified with the help provided by the Florida SBDC. All of our questions and inquiries were directed to the right people saving us considerable time in opening our business."

Joe Roy, Area Manager of the Florida SBDC met Dario and Alexia for the first time in January, 2013. “They had a detailed business plan and were very knowledgeable about their business. I recall asking them if they understood America’s love affair with pizza and how their pizza would compare. They simply smiled!”

Working with Dario and Alexia presented unique challenges for the Florida SBDC. Roy helps all business clients build their sales plan and expense budgets. Little did Roy know that the financial plan would undergo a third party independent review in Italy in order for Dario and Alexia to qualify for an investor visa! In May 2013, they returned to Italy and submitted their business plan to the U.S. Embassy for review.” I was thrilled when Dario called from Italy on May 5, 2013 indicating that visas had been issued”, said Roy.

Focaccia opened for business on September 21, 2013. Thus far, “feedback has been very positive” said Dario. “There seems to be a growing number of people who want an alternative to traditional pizza. Customers are also growing more aware of ingredients and what’s in the food they eat.” One customer commented on tripadvisor®, “This is our regular Friday night stop. Food is amazing, fresh, and lovely combinations. Have tried everything on the menu and keep coming back for more. The owners are gracious and welcoming. I would expect to find this type of locale in New York City. It’s a pleasant surprise to find it right here in Palm Coast.”

-- FSBDC --

### **About the FSBDC at UCF**

With its main office in the National Entrepreneur Center located at the Fashion Square Mall in Orlando, the Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida (FSBDC at UCF) is part of the UCF Office of Research & Commercialization and the Florida SBDC Network (FSBDC Network). THE FSBDC at UCF provides business seminars and no-cost, one-on-one business consultation to emerging and established businesses. The FSBDC at UCF serves an eight-county area that includes Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia counties and maintains 10 service centers across Central Florida.

In 2012, the FSBDC at UCF served almost 6500 entrepreneurs and small business owners through consulting and training, resulting in 9,961 Central Florida jobs created, retained or saved; \$1.3 billion in sales growth; \$50.4 million in capital formation; \$104.6 million in government contract awards; and 108 new businesses started.

### **About the FSBDC Network**

The FSBDC at UCF is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide service network funded in part through cooperative agreements with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida and other private and public partners. The Florida SBDC Network is hosted by the University of West Florida and is nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs. All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA.

For over 35 years, the FSBDC Network has nourished a statewide partnership between higher education and economic development organizations, dedicated to providing emerging and established business owners with management and technical assistance, enabling overall growth and increased profitability for the businesses and economic prosperity for the state. The FSBDC Network is a statewide service system of 41 centers with 60 outreach locations, including the FSBDC at UCF.

In 2012, the Florida SBDCs served approximately 38,000 entrepreneurs and small business owners through consulting and training, resulting in 47,845 jobs created, retained and saved; \$6.3 billion in sales growth; \$235.2 million in capital accessed; \$588.4 million in government contract awards; and 744 new businesses started. And, for every \$1 of Florida public and private sector investment in the FSBDC programing 2012, \$40 was returned to the state in tax revenue.

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State Designated as Florida’s Principal Provider of Business Assistance [§ 288.001, Fla. Stat.]