

Project Profile

Location:

125 West Main Street
Mount Pleasant, PA

County:

Westmoreland

Description:

Business Development

Total Project Cost:

\$170,300



Gluten-Free Oven



People:

The restaurant Marie’s Place specializes in pizza, and Marie Murphy loves a challenge. So when a dietician urged her to make pizza free of gluten – a wheat protein intolerable for those with celiac disease and sometimes avoided by people with autism and health problems – she gave it a try. Since then, she’s helped customers enjoy their first pizzas in years, and children sample their first pizzas ever. “They’re not left out anymore,” she says.

Progress:

Soon schools and stores began ordering her pizzas, so Marie and co-owner, Jeffrey Ehrlich decided to turn a former car wash into a gluten-free bakery. Three banks couldn’t fit their plans into their guidelines. A former client of The Progress Fund told them to call there. The Progress Fund loaned them \$80,000.

Impact:

Having hired skilled gluten-free baker Lisa Brower, Marie and Jeffrey are going beyond pizza to bread, cookies and cakes that appeal not just to celiacs, but to anyone conscious of the benefits of gluten-free food. They are planning to add café seating and a baking classroom. Though their products may be missing gluten, their taste lacks nothing. “It would be our ultimate goal that when a customer comes through the door,” says Marie, “that they do not recognize the difference.”

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