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 COVER STORY

Orland area teens learn to make pizza

JON DEPAOLIS, Contributing Editor

A dozen Bridge Teen Center participants became chefs for the day Wednesday, March 27, as Parmesans Wood Stone Pizza held a pizza-making class for the teens at its Frankfort location.

The class was part of a spring break trip for the Orland Park teen center, as participants traveled to Parmesans, 10235 W. Lincoln Highway.

Parmesans owner and chef Michael Papandrea told the teens they were all chefs for the class, and as such, they were also employees of Parmesans. That meant they had to adhere to the restaurant's policy of constantly washing their hands to maintain a sterile and clean work environment.

From there, he took the teens on a tour of the restaurant's kitchen, its wood stone oven and then taught



LEFT: Jackie Kokoska of Orland Park (left), Taylor Johnson of Tinley Park (middle) and Christina Raptis of Orland Hills spread the dough out Wednesday, March 27, as teens from The Bridge Teen Center in Orland Park learned to make pizza at Parmesans Wood Stone Pizza in Frankfort.

RIGHT: Joe Czachor of Orland Park (right) adds cheese to his pizza under the watchful eye of Parmesans owner and chef Michael Papandrea. PHOTOS BY TRISTAN ZEIER/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

them how to prepare a pizza, including getting the dough ready.

Christina Raptis, a Prairie View Junior High student, said her favorite part was patting and throwing the dough.

"It was hard," she said, noting the many steps it took to get the dough ready before adding sauce and toppings.

Jackie Kokoska, also a Prairie View student, had a slight mishap on one of her throws, with the dough landing on a lasagna noodle nearby. But she was able to roll with it, and successfully made her pizza.

She said Papandrea was a good teacher, as well.

"[Papandrea] went between us and said our pizzas



looked lovely ... even though it was really ugly," Kokoska said.

She added pepperoni to her pizza, while Raptis was content to just add cheese to her own pizza.

To spread the sauce, Papandrea instructed the teens to "use the ladle like a paintbrush."

After the pizza prep was

done, the teens were treated to already-made pizza from Parmesans and an ice cream sundae.

Jenn Jones, the program associate at the Bridge Teen Center, said Papandrea has done culinary programs at the center several times now.

"He's always really open and helpful to do anything he can to give back," she

said. "We are always looking to expose [the teens] to new things. We have a makeshift kitchen. It does great for what we want to do there, but it doesn't compare to seeing a working, commercial kitchen."

Jones said the teens had been looking forward to the trip.

"They love pizza, and they love the cooking classes," she said. "We always get a great response from our cooking classes. But this is definitely something new and different, where they get to go off-site and make it themselves. They were really excited about that."

One of the underlying themes of the class was working hard to be successful.

"Get up early and always volunteer for work," Papandrea told the teens. "That will get you to wherever you want to go. From here to there is just hard work."