

## Catering Sales Manager Michelle Caruso believes in family and friends

As a Colorado native, KM Concessions Catering Sales Manager Michelle Caruso describes herself as a homebody. And she's right. She's a Colorado native; also, she has lived in the same house for more than 33 years – just recently moving from a southern Denver suburb to an eastern Denver suburb with her husband, Paul, and five-year old son, Hunter. Paul's father also made the move with the family as he has watched his grandson since birth. Grandpa Tony also serves as the family's chef on a regular basis. Michelle lovingly calls him her personal chef and said she appreciates all his help.



*Michelle's newborn (above) and 1 ½ yr. old pictures (right)*

The Caruso family first moved into their Englewood house when Michelle was a baby. And she stayed – only leaving to attend college and to live in an apartment with Paul. Both adventures lasted less than six months each, and Michelle returned to the house, staying after her parents divorced. She stayed and continued the tradition of hosting parties and holiday celebrations for family and friends. But when the house grew too small for the family, it was time to move.



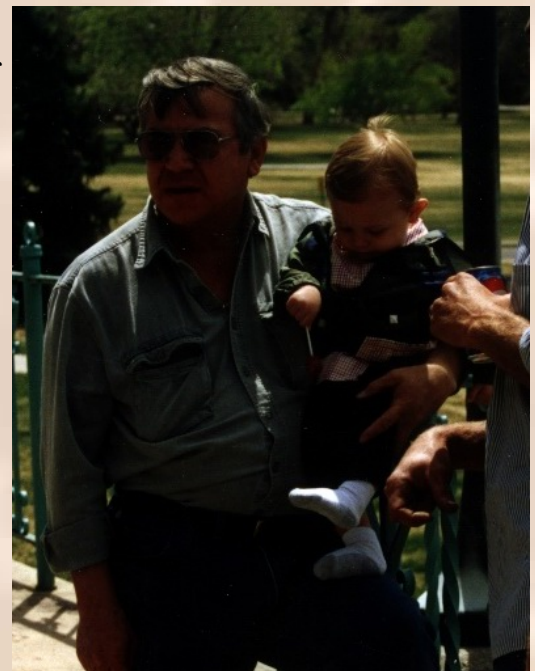
With Michelle's enthusiasm for and dedication to her family and friends, she considers her greatest possession to be her family and friends.



*Michelle with her father, the Vice Principal, 1994*

Michelle graduated from Bishop Machebeuf High School, a well-known and respected Catholic school in the metropolitan area. Her father was vice principal at the school. Michelle shared it was very difficult to be in the same school environment as a parent, especially since he was the one who disciplined students.

Also at times, her father strongly suggested to Michelle not to date certain boys. Even though Michelle stayed on a straight and narrow path, she did have to face her father once to be disciplined for wearing her skirt too short. She remembers she was devastated, and she recalls her father was uncomfortable and not sure what to do.



*Grandpa Tony with Hunter*



*Michelle and Paul*

After graduating from in high school, Michelle dated one of Paul's best friends and met Paul at that time. She eventually broke up with the friend, and a few years later, her only sister, Jaclyn, saw Paul at a concert and told him that Michelle wasn't dating anyone. He called, Michelle responded, and they've been together 11 years. Paul later told Michelle that he always liked her, even while she was dating his friend.

Two or three times a month, Michelle and Paul host poker nights at their house. The tradition



*Michelle and her sister  
Jaclyn, 1984*

started at their house in Englewood and continues in their new home in the Aurora area. The gamblers represent friends and family members, including moms, dads, step-parents and siblings. And it's serious Texas Hold'em time, they don't play at the kitchen table. A friend made two poker tables – complete with cup holders -- for the contests.



*Michelle's mother, her niece Anastacia,  
and son Hunter*

When not hosting poker tournaments, the couple enjoys entertaining friends and family for dinner. To Michelle, that is a perfect evening. The Englewood house has been the gathering spot for many Thanksgiving dinners where around 30 – 40 enjoy the holiday. No wonder this holiday is Michelle's favorite.

Even though Michelle calls herself a homebody, she would like to travel to Italy to see the architecture and the history. Also, pasta is one of her favorite foods. Did she get her taste for this culinary delight from her Italian grandmother? Even though she'd like to see her grandmother more often, Michelle is glad she lives in New

Jersey. "If my grandmother lived here, I'd weigh 800 pounds. I'd be seriously huge!" exclaimed Michelle. She added her grandmother considers it an insult if you don't eat. Michelle would also like to travel back to the Grand Cayman Islands. While on a cruise, one port of call was at the island with its sweeping white sands and clear blue waters. For the first time, the Colorado native experienced snorkeling as well as swimming with rays at Stingray City, which is a series of shallow sand bars where stingrays swim in abundance, and visitors can feed, pet and interact with the animals. These watery



*Hunter and Paul on Hunter's 1st Birthday*

accomplishments speak volumes about a woman who when she was little, wouldn't get in the water because she could see things floating in the water, such as minnows.

### **When not at work . . .**

While in her free time, Michelle and her family enjoy going to movies, on bike rides and eating out. Recently, the family visited a fishing pond, where all anglers are guaranteed to catch fish. Michelle empathically said that claim was a lie! She explained that her five-year-old son was catching fish, her mother was catching fish, her husband was catching fish, but she wasn't. After 1½ hours, Michelle gave up and sat on the bank to read a magazine. However, it may have been a good thing that Michelle didn't catch any fish, as she absolutely hates sushi. She said, "I never, ever eat it, it's nasty!"



*Hunter's catch!*



*Michelle with the "Panthers"*



*Michelle (back right), on the boys team*

Unlike many women, Michelle likes sports and claims she semi-understands most athletic competitions. She said she believes her dad wanted a boy when she born as her father treated her like a tomboy. When her father was a

high school coach, Michelle was team manager and water "boy." She started playing soccer while in fourth grade. As the only girl on the team, Michelle recalled telling her dad that she wasn't going to play, as the rest of the team were all boys. "Boys were scary back then," she added. She continued to play soccer for the next 10 years, and ended up on all girls team, called the Panthers. Michelle excelled at the sport in high school and earned a college scholarship to Benedictine College, the same college that Kevin McNicholas attended. The college is located in Atchison, Kansas on a beautiful 120-acre campus atop the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River. While she didn't graduate like KM did, she enjoyed her time at the liberal arts college as she was playing soccer and getting to travel for competitions. Once the soccer season ended, and the only entertainment involved shopping at Wal-Mart or as she called it, "Wally World," she started to rethink her decision to attend the small college 10 hours from home. On the day she was to return to school after the Christmas break, she told her parents she wasn't going back. And she didn't, she even had her college roommate pack her belongings and mail them to her.



*Unknown to most, Michelle is also a professional Wrestling enthusiast. Pictured here with her favorite, the "Undertaker"*



**Michelle and Hunter**

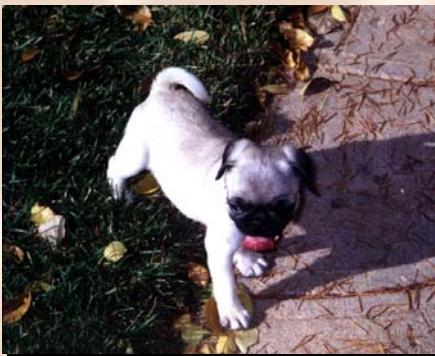
Michelle describes herself as a lipstick fanatic. She doesn't go anywhere without it applied to her smiling lips. She shared she even played soccer with her hair styled and make-up expertly applied. Her mom would yell at her and tell her, "no lipstick!" But she didn't listen.

Not getting angry is a trait Michelle claims to have. She added she gets irritated if something is not going her way, but doesn't get angry. Michelle recommends that people shouldn't get angry, but just get over it and move on as it's not worth being angry as life is too short.

Michelle doesn't have any favorite television shows. But she's recently gotten hooked on *Rock Star: Supernova*. This reality show features 15 contestants competing to become the lead vocalist for a newly-formed super group featuring rock and roll stars. As the show's name implies, the new group will be called Supernova. She said, "I think it's a funny (show) and they're (contestants) horrible."

The 1980s *The Goonies* movie and the 1970s *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* are Michelle's favorite movies. She shared she had a big crush on the stars of the thrill-a-minute adventure film, *The Goonies*. Her son has the DVD of the treasure hunt movie, and they watch it over and over. Michelle also enjoyed *Willy Wonka*, a musical about a world famous candy maker who hides five golden tickets in candy bars for five lucky children. "It's much better than the one that recently came out," she added.

Michelle doesn't have a favorite entertainer or book. "I'm not a book reader. If it's a good book, they'll make a movie, and I'll see it in 1½ hours," she said.



**Hunter's dog "Scrappy"**

Her greatest passion right now is her son, Hunter. He recently started kindergarten, and she had to buy a separate calendar to keep track of his schedule. One requirement is that she has to read to her son 20 minutes a day and record it.



### **Starting at KM Concessions . . .**

Michelle started with the company as catering sales manager at Ocean Journey in 1999. She's one of the few KM Concessions employees that hasn't flipped burgers at the zoo.

Her work history includes stints as a car dealership receptionist, a Glamour Shots photographer and hotel catering sales. When she got the job at Ocean Journey, she wasn't even looking to make a change from her hotel catering sales position. She just



**Michelle and Hunter feed the Giraffes at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's popular African Rift Valley exhibit.**

happened to glance at the newspaper classified section while waiting for an appointment, saw the help wanted ad and thought it would be fun to plan events at the aquarium.

Her bubbly personality, attention to details and believer in the importance of family and friends certainly makes Michelle an asset to the company.