**Assignment 4 - Reporting and Writing for Publication**

MMC 6936

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**Craft a News Article**

PORT ORANGE, Fla. – Big Mike’s Burgers and More, a new family-owned restaurant in New Smyrna Beach, is experiencing a surge in popularity as it prepares to expand. The restaurant, known for its flavorful burgers, signature sauce, pretzel buns and welcoming atmosphere, has become a staple in the community under the leadership of 23-year-old entrepreneur Michael “Big Mike” Saljanin.

The restaurant opened in 2022, and has slowly gained popularity, attracting a variety of demographics and giving long-standing restaurants a run for their money. “I think the (pretzel) buns and our flavors are really what makes the burgers special,” said Saljanin. “You won’t really see any other places doing pretzel buns in the area. I think the customers like it.” With his father, Frank Saljanin, by his side, the father-son duo has turned Big Mike’s into a place where family tradition meets modern entrepreneurship. “My dad used to cook when I was a kid and teach me about how important it is as a basic skill,” said Saljanin, emphasizing the family-centric inspiration for the business.

Their menu offers a wide range of fresh, angus beef smashburgers, such as “The Classic,” the “Big Mike’s,” and the “Fat Boy.” They also offer hot dogs, house-made waffle fries, milkshakes and more. Since Big Mike’s opened soon after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Saljanin reflected on the economic strain on small businesses and expressed his pleasant surprise in the rapid success of the restaurant. “I didn’t expect us to do well at first because of COVID. I think now I don’t worry about it, but you know, a lot of places went under at the time,” said Saljanin. His success story is a testament to the power of hard work, passion, and a deep connection to local roots, as Big Mike’s steps up to fill the gap left by the closure of Ritter’s Frozen Custard in Port Orange.

The ice cream shop began operation in 1999. After nearly 26 years of operation, the property lease expired, and the landlord put the property up for sale. After Ritter’s closed its doors, the property attracted several interested buyers, all of whom planned to tear down the building entirely. The Saljanins, however, sought to keep and remodel the building, honoring and incorporating Ritter’s legacy into their business. Michael Saljanin is a local himself. Having attended New Smyrna Beach High School, he and his family certainly have an attachment to the community’s atmosphere and wish to keep its spirit alive. As word spread of Ritter’s closing, locals mourned the location of countless formative experiences and community events.

John and Renee Dame, the owners of Ritter’s, reflected on a long legacy of community enrichment. “This is where I would put a quote from John or Renee,” said Alex Triplett, the author of this story. “My hope is that it will be about how it is painful for them to say goodbye, but that they support the Saljanins and wish them success.” Despite the closing of Ritter’s, Saljanin remains optimistic, viewing it as an opportunity to continue the spirit of local, family-run establishments in a rapidly changing community.

In addition to Big Mike’s the family also owns Frozen Gold ice cream shop, another local New Smyrna Beach establishment that has been in operation since 1970. The Saljanins purchased the property in 2021 and plan to offer Frozen Gold ice cream, along with their burgers at the new Big Mike’s location. As the restaurant gains momentum, Michael reflects on his journey, juggling the highs and lows of running a small business. “I always wanted to do this. I think knowing the people like the food is really what makes me love doing it. It can be stressful, but I think it’s worth it to see it do well.” said Saljanin, who aims to keep the local charm of New Smyrna Beach and Port Orange alive amidst the growing presence of chain restaurants.

As far as the future goes, the Saljanin family hopes to expand even further, but have their hands full with the current renovation of the old Ritter’s building. “We’re working on our second location at Ritter’s, so for now I am really focused on making sure I get a handle on that,” said Saljanin. In a sea of chain restaurants, the Saljanins are working hard to ensure that the local culture and history of New Smyrna Beach and Port Orange are respected and preserved. As Big Mike’s prepares to expand, the stage is set for the passing of the torch to budding business owners, and an exciting future of local entrepreneurship.