



Margherita Finelli

Super Citizen

UA native returns home to reconnect

By Alicia Kelso

Sometimes things just come full circle. Take, for example, the path of Margherita Finelli. Born and raised in Upper Arlington, Finelli's career led her to Pittsburgh and then Cincinnati before taking her right back home.

Although she enjoyed both cities and achieved much success, neither ever felt quite like home. With a powerful magnetism, Upper Arlington was always in the back of Finelli's mind, and she eventually gravitated back about a decade ago.

Not only did Finelli return to her roots,

she reconnected and encouraged others to do the same. She started a resourceful Web site, www.uasupersite.com, which lists businesses, organizations, events – everything you can imagine that has anything at all to do with UA.

Because of the site, residents are in the know about the goings on, the comings up, the where to eat and what to do. They can chat about their favorite memories, find places to live, or shop for Golden Bear gear. Surfers also can look at pictures from various community events, find out when the library is holding a class, learn a little history

about the area, and even enter contests to win prizes.

The one-stop site is comprehensive – listing as many UA entities possible – and the effort to get it started and to maintain it – it launched five years ago this summer – is a labor of love. Although Finelli doesn't necessarily consider herself "Web savvy," she felt the urge to develop something that connected UA residents based on her own impulse to get connected.

Finelli graduated from Upper Arlington High School in 1975, and purposefully stayed close for college, graduating

School's Out ... for Spring Break

Spring break for Upper Arlington students will be Friday, March 14 through Friday, March 21. Classes will resume on Monday, March 24.

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency: 9-1-1
 Police, non-emergency: 614-459-2800
 Fire, non-emergency: 614-451-9700
 City of Upper Arlington: 614-583-5000
 City Public Services Department:
 614-583-5350
 City Parks & Recreation Department:
 614-583-5300
 City Cultural Arts Division:
 614-583-5310
 LifeLong Learning & Leisure Division:
 614-583-5333
 Senior Center: 614-583-5320
 UA City Schools: 614-487-5000
 Main Library: 614-486-9621
 Lane Road Library: 614-459-0273
 Miller Park Branch Library:
 614-488-5710

City Council

Mayor Donald Leach, Jr., president
 Mary Ann Krauss, vice president
 Frank Ciotola
 Linda Mauger
 Edward Seidel, Jr.
 Wade Steen
 Erik Yassenoff

Upcoming meetings: 7:30 p.m., March 10 and April 14 and 28, at the Municipal Services Center, Council Chamber, 3600 Tremont Rd. Visit www.ua-oh.net for a list of agendas and summaries. For complete information, call City Clerk Beverly Clevenger at 614-583-5030.

UA Civic Association

Brad Ward, president
 Joan Mast, vice president
 Debbie Gaup, treasurer
 Megan Byrne, secretary
 614-470-0655
www.uaca.org

www.upperarlingtonmagazine.com



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from The Ohio State University in 1978 with a degree in communications - radio and TV. "It was such a wonderful experience, everything about living here - the school, the friends, the community," Finelli says. "When I was growing up in Upper Arlington, I could walk into the store and say 'hi' to the owners, and I can still do that today. Not much has changed. We still have our roots here - that Mayberry experience. It's weird, but it's a good weird."

When she left for jobs in television production, first to Pittsburgh and then to Cincinnati, Finelli admits she was perpetually homesick. "I loved Cincinnati especially, and because of my job, I spent a lot of time getting to know that community. But it wasn't the same. No other community comes together like this one," Finelli says.

She returned in the late '80s for a similar job in television and radio sales, and is currently the communications lead for the Student Information System project at OSU. One summer day, while searching the Internet for activities for her son, Nicholas, now 10, she came up empty, inspiring her to develop a site with as much UA-related information as possible.

She enlisted the help of a friend, Ellen Clark, to help her with the design, and the two worked 16 hours a day for about a year before the launch. "I've never worked so many hours for so little pay and had so much fun in my life," Finelli says.

She spent those hours attending events, connecting with civic organizations, meeting people at the schools, churches and parks, introducing herself to those who own businesses, and "just being as connected to everyone in UA as possible," she says. On July 4, 2003, www.uasupersite.com was launched.



UA students take advantage of some contests sponsored by the UASupersite, including "Where's the bear?"

www.upperarlingtonmagazine.com

Finelli updates the site at least once a day and spends most of the time working on it over the weekends. All the while, she maintains her full-time job, one she attributes to her education while growing up in a wonderful school system.

"When I was in high school, we had a TV studio, and that was so rare at the time and because of that, I have had a long, successful career in television. There are thousands of reasons I love this community and am so grateful to be from this community, and that is just one of them," Finelli says. "I have always wanted to come home and give something back, and it turned out to be through an online resource."

Finelli also is giving back as a director at the UA Civic Association. She received her gold jacket in January and is "honored" to be part of the organization. "The UACA is a cornerstone organization in this community that I've wanted to be part of for a very long time," she says. "I feel very privileged to be part of it now."

Eventually, Finelli's goal is to have the site be entirely nonprofit, and for high school students to help her maintain the page. "They can bring a lot to this with their energy and their connectivity, and, in turn, I think they can really learn a lot about their community through this," she says. "That includes my son. I want him to be as involved as possible, and I want to share with him all of the wonderful experiences I had growing up in this town."

Finelli doesn't promote products or politics on her Web site. She does, however, list events that are free or open to the public. For more information, visit www.uasupersite.com.

Alicia Kelso is editor of Upper Arlington Magazine.



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UA High School students work in a garden as part of the high school's Summer Institute service learning project, which allows students to fulfill their service hours during the summer.

Education in Action

UA high school students learn through community service

By Liza Martin

He's been a mentor to freshmen at Upper Arlington High School. He's also been a tutor and donated his time at a local food pantry.

Tad Ritter is one of thousands of students at the high school who has immersed himself in the community to complete service hours, a commitment he describes as a great transition from the classroom to the "real" world. "It not only helps students, but allows us to get involved in our community and in Columbus as a whole," the 17-year-old senior says.

This year, Ritter works with other students in the Peer Collaboration program, which "allows students to benefit from one another's talents," he says.

The program identifies students' particular talents and then pairs them with peers, faculty and projects that utilize those talents. About 140 high students are involved in the 6-year-old program, part of the high school's service learning program, which incorporates skills learned in the classroom to experiences in the community, says Jeanne Gogolski, career development/service learning coordinator for UAHS. Both the school's service and service learning programs

are closely tied to the district's Career Development program.

"There are tons and tons of ways for kids to use their talents. Everyone has a talent, and so anyone can be part of Peer Collaboration," Gogolski says.

Both UA middle schools and the high school are recognized by the Ohio Department of Education as National Service Learning Leaders. And the high school's service learning is one of only six model programs in Ohio recognized by the state's Department of Education, Gogolski says, adding that those honors reflect how important students, parents and educators deem community service.