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CHANGING THE WORLD, ONE BURGER AT A TIME

KAT PASCAL, THE CO-OWNER OF FARMBURGUESA, STEPS
INTO ROLE AS A COMMUNITY LEADER.



KAT PASCAL HURRIES in the front door of her two-story Raleigh Court home. Her dogs are barking. She

has a stack of to-go burger boxes in her hand. She pauses to hug her fiancé's aunt, visiting from Colombia. Pascal asks in Spanish if she has everything she needs. Then Pascal turns, smiling, and settles into her meeting.

It's one of a million moments in Pascal's every day. At any given hour, the phone is ringing. Her two elementary-school-aged boys need homework help. There's a question to answer at one of FarmBurguesa's two locations or the commercial cleaning business all owned by her and her fiancé, Jimmy Delgado. She's posting on social media. Taking classes at Virginia Western. Connecting with other entrepreneurs. Helping design a mural going up in Grandin Village.

"We are both workers. We're workaholics," she laughs, speaking of Delgado and herself. "But, to be honest I'd rather be busy and chaotic. We've learned to kind of embrace who we are."

It's not only the day-to-day of keeping three businesses afloat or the swirl of family responsibilities. Pascal — who turned 30 last month — has also signed on as a community leader.

She serves on the board of directors at Blue Ridge Literacy, the Grandin Village Business Association and the Roanoke City schools Central Council PTA. She has represented Southwest Virginia's Hispanic business owners at a national Chamber of Commerce gathering in Washington, D.C. She's donned a pink wig to raise funds for Susan G. Komen Virginia Blue Ridge.

In 2017, she and Delgado founded Nuestra Comunidad Latino, a networking community for area Latinos. Even the FarmBurguesa concept has deep community connections:

the beef and many of the condiments and vegetables on their burgers are locally sourced.

Why take on so much? In part, it's out

of gratitude — for where she is and where's she's been. In part, she thrives with connection. It's also simply who she is.

"I'm just a giver. And my parents are givers. Jimmy's very much like that, too. And so when you find yourself around people that are as compassionate as you are, it just makes it easy."

To Pascal — whose positivity is contagious — every interaction is a chance to make the world a better place.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In 2000, Pascal was a 10-year-old girl with big brown eyes, an older brother and a younger brother, a mother who did not speak English, and a father who worked three jobs and was often out of town. The family moved frequently across the Roanoke Valley, to wherever they could rent a place, land work, pay the bills. Every dollar was stretched. They had each other but not much more.

It was Pascal who went to the bank if her mother needed someone to translate. It was Pascal who called dentist offices when her mother developed a debilitating toothache.

Pascal remembers thinking: "Oh my God, my mom is suffering, what do I do? I have no idea."

Moments like those, they shaped Pascal. They taught her to be a problem solver. And they planted an appreciation for the teachers, the family friends — and the strangers — who helped her along the way.

"I just remember running into folks that were not patient and then the ones that were. I was like, 'Oh, I want to be that person.' Because they make a difference."

Pascal landed her first job at 14. She hasn't stopped working since. Kroger. Burger King. Golden Corral. Helping manage her father's food truck. She worked in IT at Advance Auto Parts as a junior in high school.

By age 20, she was a bilingual sales associate at BB&T. Five years later, she had a closet full of suits, a manager's office at Wells Fargo and an understanding of how the corporate world worked.

But by then, she was a mother of two. She and Delgado had started their first business, Spotless America, a commercial cleaning company. As satisfying as it was to help people navigate the complex rules of banking, Pascal was desperate for more time with her boys. When Spotless America's accountant told her she could afford to quit her 9 to 5, she jumped.

Delgado's dream was always to open a restaurant. When a tiny storefront became available in Vinton in 2017, the couple consulted Pascal's older brother, Andres Pascal, and his wife, Ashley Overbay. With their combined dollars and skills, the two families thought they could pull it off.

Delgado had worked for years at Grace's Place Pizzeria. So FarmBurguesa's concept, the menu, the kitchen layout, it was all in his head. Pascal brought her business sense to the table, highlighting every moment on social media and lining up family-friendly events and ribbon cuttings to entice people to try the new eatery.

There were bumps in the road, for sure. Construction delays. Complaints that the space was not handicapped accessible. Glitches in the food supply chain.

There was also a line out the door, a buzz over the farm-y decor and local flavor, and a warm embrace of a new pair of entrepreneurial rock stars.

"It's really exciting for me to see them be successful," says Eric Altizer, marketing manager at Optical Cable Corporation and friend to both Pascal and Delgado. "Jimmy's really good at understanding what to do to run the business and Kat's really good at promoting it."

It wasn't long before Pascal and Delgado were announcing FarmBurguesa's second location, this one in their Grandin Village neighborhood.

BUSINESS CREATIVE

What is Pascal's particular genius?

Some might call her a synthesizer. She brings out people's talents and connects them to the resources they need to thrive. She's a sympathetic listener. And a fast learner.

She puts it this way: "I think everybody is a creative but all of us are creative in different ways. The nice thing is that I'm able to capture what's in Jimmy's and Andres's brains. And then I'm able to put it all together."

"I love launching a business. And I love the operation piece," she says.

A year ago, Pascal convinced her FarmBurguesa team to audition for the long-running reality TV show "Shark Tank." They drove to Nashville, pitched their proposal and advanced through two more rounds before getting the email that ended their run — this time.

Even without a TV investor, Pascal can see FarmBurguesa's big idea becoming reality: A chain of fast-casual, farm-to-table burger spots dotting the country.

Pascal can envision her crew owning and running five FarmBurguesas from Lynchburg to Blacksburg. But why stop there? If there are business owners who want to buy FarmBurguesa's concept and open it far from Southwest Virginia, Pascal and team are happy to talk.

"I don't know how she does it, I really don't," says Grace Niday, owner and namesake of Grace's Place Pizzeria, and an old family friend. "I don't think this is going to stop here. Kat's got a lot of energy. She's very organized to do all she does. She's amazing to me."

But if Delgado's dream is to feed Roanoke's bodies, Pascal's might be to warm their souls. For her, the restaurants are a way to bring everyone in her communities together.

For a burger, yes. But also a kind word. A hug. And a point in the right direction.

"It goes a long way, when you have somebody saying, you can do it," Pascal says. "The power of positive words and the reinforcement they can provide to people.... Oh my gosh, it goes a long way." ☆

