

Dennis and Lisa Brown

Please provide your biographical information.

Lisa - I grew up in Severna Park, Maryland. I majored in Health and Physical Education with a concentration in Corporate Fitness Management in 1991. I returned to WCU in 2010 to take a few undergraduate nutrition courses after pursuing a M.S. in Nutrition Education from Immaculate University in 2001. I chose West Chester for my undergraduate degree because it was one of a few schools that offered a unique concentration in the up and coming field of corporate fitness.

Dennis - I grew up in Frazer, PA and went to Great Valley HS. I majored in Health and Physical Education and received my teacher certificate from WCU in 1991. I began my career teaching Physical Education in West Philadelphia for the Philadelphia School District in a Kindergarten – 8th grade school. During my time there I went back to school at Immaculate University where I completed my master's degree in Educational Administration and received my principal certificate in 1998. In the spring of 1999 I began my administrative career in the Coatesville Area School District where I was an assistant principal for four months and then the principal of East Fallowfield Elementary for three years. I have now been working as a principal in the West Chester Area School District at the elementary level for the past 13 years.

What made you go into Physical Education and Nutrition?

Lisa - I had always been very active in sports growing up and was very interested in fitness, but my real passion was and still is nutrition.

Dennis - My passion even as a teenager was about athletics, but more importantly I loved to help teach and coach younger children. This love of coaching was directly related to watching my dad and others coach myself and my brothers. Physical Education and athletics continue to this day to instill drive, determination and dedication in me and these three things I believe make you successful in life.

What have you been doing since graduating from WCU?

Lisa – I have been a stay-at-home mom for 20 years raising our five girls and volunteering at their schools and at our church.

Dennis - I have spent the past 23 years involved in helping children in every aspect of life from school, to the gym to the fields and even through church. Our lives have been dedicated to making children realize that life is challenging, exciting, fun and purposeful. With this new adventure in our life with Kona Ice we now bring that excitement and fun to kids of all ages in Chester County.

What is your official title and what are your current responsibilities at work?

Lisa - My husband Dennis and I are owners of Kona Ice of Southern Chester County. Kona Ice is a mobile tropical shaved ice entertainment vehicle that operates in 42 states and two countries. Ours is the 9th truck in PA and the first in Chester County. I am responsible for most of the day to day operations while Dennis handles the truck related responsibilities.

Dennis – I am the Principal at East Goshen Elementary where I manage a school of 420 students and 60 faculty and staff members. I work not only with staff, but parents and children to help them become the best they can be academically, emotionally and socially. I also help a run a professional learning community for the elementary principals in Chester County.

What does a typical day like at work?

Lisa and Dennis - There are no typical days with Kona Ice! We get to celebrate milestones like birthday parties, weddings, and graduations with some really great people. We also work all kinds of sporting events helping organizations raise money for their teams.

Dennis – I try to spend most of my day in and out of the classrooms making close contact with both students and teachers. At times administrative work does take time, but the joy of being a principal is engaging the children and staff that work with your children.

What have been the biggest challenges at work?

Lisa - The biggest challenge for me has been trying to grow the business while still keeping a balance between work and family life. We together have had to make some sacrifices, but the rewards of watching our whole family become part of our Kona Ice family has been beyond our expectations.

Dennis -The biggest challenge I believe is balancing the pressure of education mandates and what people think is important with what we as educators believe is most important for our children. More and more time is taken up by paper work that keeps me away from the classroom where we truly have the greatest effect on our children.

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

Lisa and Dennis - What I enjoy most is being able to work the truck with my husband and kids. Having the kids involved in the business has been a great learning experience for them. Also, the joy of watching others enjoy the Kona Ice experience with their children and families has really made us feel positive about taking this risk in our lives. Watching the little ones smile and laugh while getting a Kona is all it takes to make our day.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Lisa - I enjoy spending time with my family, coaching CYO and club volleyball, going to the beach, and reading.

Dennis - I love to be part of every aspect of my children and wife's' lives! I also enjoy volunteering at our church ABVM in West Grove.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Lisa - I will continue to own and operate Kona Ice of Southern Chester County while staying dedicated to our family and volunteering in our schools and at Church.

Dennis - I see myself right where I am now with helping Lisa with Kona Ice, being the best dad I can be to my children and dedicating myself to help East Goshen Elementary and WCASD be the best they can be.

What advice would you give to a current student who aspires to follow in your footsteps and pursue a similar career path?

Lisa - While in school get involved, meet lots of people, and take advantage of every opportunity available to you. Also work hard and keep an open mind about your career path. You never know where this life will take you!

Dennis - Stay focused on what is important and do what you do best and love the most. Dedicate yourself to helping others and keep the focus on them and you will be successful in any career path, but especially one that works with children or deals with children.

How has your WCU education contributed to your success?

Lisa - I had some great professors at West Chester who challenged me to think critically and problem solve all while making class fun. I also had some great classes in Food and Nutrition while at West Chester that sparked my interest in food service. My background in Nutrition played a huge role in choosing Kona Ice over any other food truck business.

Dennis - The Health and Physical Education Department in the late 80s and early 90s taught us that hard work and self-discipline will make you successful in life. The professors that I had also cared about you as a person and made sure that they guided you in a positive direction even it was not what you wanted to hear at the time. I look back with great memories and still remember the lessons I learned down at SOUTH CAMPUS!

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments (both personally and professionally)?

Lisa - Without a doubt my greatest accomplishment is raising our girls with Dennis. Nothing brings me more joy or makes me more proud then seeing them grow into awesome young ladies.

Dennis - My greatest personal accomplishment is my family. I have incredible wife that I met at WCU and we now have five outstanding girls/ladies and my life would not be the same without them. My greatest professional accomplishment has been making a difference in the lives of children that I have taught, coached and worked with over the years and the lessons they have taught me!