

BLACK & GOLD

The Official Magazine of St. John Vianney High School

Fall 2013



S² Supermen

**A CASE STUDY IN
ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT**

St. John Vianney
HIGH SCHOOL

**INSIDE:
2012-13
Annual Report**

Alumni Profile



Chris Klein '97 and Andy Frisella '97 shared a bond on the football field at Vianney and do still today in the corporate suite of their business

Every Monday, **Chris Klein**, a 1997 Vianney grad, does nearly the same thing. He hops into a truck at the break of dawn and drives seven hours back and forth to Springfield, MO. He's been doing it for years, even though he probably doesn't need to do it. After all, he is one half of the ownership of Supplement Superstores - a chain of fitness supplement stores he founded with fellow Vianney grad **Andy Frisella** more than 14 years ago. Springfield, Klein said, held a special significance for he and Frisella. It was there that the iconic Supplement Superstores planted its first corporate seed. It was a single store that in a little over a decade would grow to 13 stores, and a corporate behemoth that would be both a pain and a thrill in their lives for many years to come.

"I could make that drive to Springfield in my sleep, I've done it so many times," Klein said. Frisella, his high school friend and business partner chimes in.

"Chris does it because it needs to be done and it also sends a message to all of our employees that none of us is too high up to do the grunt work. It also is good that our employees down there see Chris on a regular basis. And, Chris enjoys seeing those guys so the trip makes sense on many levels for Chris and the company," Frisella said.

More than anything, Supplement Superstores has enjoyed unparalleled success due to its corporate culture and its dedication to customer service. Maybe even more than anything to do with Frisella and Klein. They are the names on the corporate filings, but they do all they can do to ensure their business is about its core values than personalities. These values center around treating people right - inside the company and on the sales floor, Frisella said.

"We don't do a lot of media, even though we are asked because we never want this to be about us. It's more about our customers, our business partners, our team, our brand. It's not about us," Frisella said.

None of their current successes came easy. They had to work for it.

"I can count about 10 different times when we were about ready to close the doors on the business and by some miracle the circumstances worked themselves out and we were able to save the

business. And 10 may be a low number. We had our share of struggles keeping this going, but we did. I still remember selling our first item for \$7. It took us almost eight months to have sales over \$100 in a single day. But we stayed true to our business model, stayed true to our customers, and made it through those hard times."

Recently, Frisella and Klein helped Vianney in a major way. They worked with President **Mike Loyet**, himself a 1977 graduate, to help with a major upgrade of the school's weight room and fitness facilities this past summer with new equipment, lighting, signage

and painting. The area is a point of pride for Vianney. Both Klein and Frisella played football for teams coached by Loyet and **Paul Rhame**, and the two alums felt obliged to help pay forward the goodness Vianney gave to them. The gift, Klein said, "was our way of giving back to a place that gave Andy and I so much in our lives."

Vianney had a huge impact on them - both in the classroom and on the playing fields.

"I was so far ahead in college because of Vianney, I think I was bored for my first two years," Frisella said. "I was in Level 3 classes at St. Louis University pulling A's and B's when everyone else was struggling. I attribute that to Vianney having me so well prepared for school."

Klein ended up in Southwestern Missouri to play football for Missouri State University,

formerly Southwest Missouri State (SMS). After a few years, Frisella moved there and the two founded the first Supplement Superstore in a strip mall in town.

It took six full years to see any success. After riding it out, the two considered expanding the brand into other markets - notably Kansas City. Unexpectedly, Andy got a call from a supplement store owner in St. Louis.

"He called us on a Monday and by Thursday night, I was already back in St. Louis," Frisella said. "Looking back, it would have been easier to open our own store rather than try and take over his failing store and rebrand it. We learned a lot of valuable lessons on that deal. One thing we didn't realize was how hard it would be to deal with the stigma of a struggling business and its employees. All this while trying to turn it around by instilling our way of doing things with the



customers and employees. It was a struggle to get buy-in from the employees.”

Frisella hears younger entrepreneurs dream of success right out of college ... like they fell into it. Klein and Frisella had anything but that primrose path in developing the Supplement Superstores brand. There were many failures, and many periods of gloom and doom.

“We made all the mistakes you’d expect young entrepreneurs to make,” Klein said. “The difference with us was that once we made a mistake, we learned from it and then we never made the same mistake again.”

The branding of their stores was a major success. The “S” squared logo can be seen on T-shirts, banners, TV commercials, websites and even tattoos. Frisella, a voracious reader, said he wanted the brand to resonate with consumers, much like Harley Davidson’s brand.

“You look at it and a company like Harley-Davidson builds a personal connection with their fans, and that’s what I was trying to capture with our branding,” Frisella

said. “Branding is more than a logo and images, it’s a culture you instill in your company - a personal connection from your brand to your fans. Now, if we put out on Facebook that we are releasing a new T-shirt design, there will be people lined up at our stores to get it. The branding has been a big success.”

“We work well together because Chris and I love doing the things the other person hates,” Frisella said.

The Klein-Frisella partnership works because both guys appreciate the talents and gifts the other brings to the job each day. Frisella and Klein have built a cohesive team, with Vianney grads **David Woods ’92**, an attorney, **Mike Hurley ’97** and Andy’s brother, **Sal Frisella ’99** working for the company. Andy credits the strong work ethic of his father with instilling ambition and determination in him.

Some corporate chiefs spend many days on golf courses or at country clubs. Not so for these two. They are up at the break of dawn and their days sometimes just meld into the next day. Finding a work-life balance is difficult. There is always work to be done for Supplement Superstores, a company which relies on no outside capitalization to get by.

The company’s success comes down to the concept of trust. When a customer enters a Supplement Superstore, he meets with a team member who speaks with them about desires and outcomes and not just to sell them a product they don’t need. The focus, Frisella said, is on “making friends so we have return customers and lifetime advocates.”

“Trust builds loyalty and you cannot have one without the other. I tell our people all of the time that the focus is on educating the consumer about what’s good for them, and not to just sell them stuff they may not need.”

The future looks bright for S-2 as it continues to expand its retail stores and outlets. The two friends are working on an e-commerce website they think will make their company S-2 a top online retailer. And, 1st Phorm, the manufacturing company which Frisella and Klein partner, continues its Research and Development to bring products to the market on a national and international scale.

“There are so many people who think success is an overnight thing. It takes a lot of patience, and a lot of time and you have to be willing to put in the work needed,” Klein said.

SAVE THE DATES!

Tom Cella ’92 Memorial Trivia Night

Make plans to join us for the 9th Annual Tom Cella Memorial Trivia Night hosted by Dan McLaughlin ’92 on **Saturday, December 7th, 2013** at Vianney. For more information, contact Molly Walsh, Director of Constituent Relations, at (314) 965-4853 ext. 166 or send her an e-mail at mwalsh@vianney.com.

2014 Alumni Association Trivia Night

The Vianney Alumni Association is sponsoring its Trivia Night event on **Saturday, January 25th, 2014** at Vianney. For more information, contact Molly Walsh, Director of Constituent Relations, at (314) 965-4853 ext. 166 or send her an e-mail at mwalsh@vianney.com

2014 Night of the Griffin

Make plans to join us for the 2014 Vianney Auction - Night of the Griffin on **Saturday, February 15th, 2014**. Contact Mark Schuermann ’03, Director of Events, at (314) 965-4853 ext. 144 for more information about this year’s Auction.

2014 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Vianney’s **2014 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony** will be held on **Sunday, June 1, 2014**. Look for additional information in this edition of the *Black and Gold*, on Vianney’s Facebook page ([facebook.com/vianneygriffins](https://www.facebook.com/vianneygriffins)) and online at vianney.com.



Get in the game this year with your official Black and Gold colors from the Vianney Griffin Store! The Griffin Store has a variety of items for men, women, and students. The store is open according to the following schedule:

MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY

- 7:15 A.M. - 7:45 A.M. - 9:10 A.M. - 9:40 A.M.
- 2:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY

- 8:30 A.M. - 9:00 A.M. - 2:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

For more information contact Tim McVey ’76
at tmcvey@vianney.com.