

Upper Darby native named to Forbes 30 under 30 list



Barbara DelleMonache, formerly of Upper Darby, has been named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 list after creating Curl Vitality. "It was the best way to close out my twenties!" Barbara DelleMonache, now 30, says. (COURTESY OF LUMINOUS 5 PHOTOGRAPHY)

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A 2012 Upper Darby High School alum has been named to the *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list for her creation of a subscription service and coaching focusing on curly hair care.

“It was the best way to close out my twenties!” Barbara DelleMonache, now 30, said.

Although she now lives in Mullica Hill, N.J., her roots run pretty deep in Upper Darby.

Born and raised in Delaware County’s most populous municipality, DelleMonache also attended St. Andrew School in Drexel Hill for elementary school and the Drexel Hill Middle School.

She also was heavily involved in Upper Darby’s Summer Stage.

She said her favorite performances were “Cinderella” and “Yo! Vikings,” an original musical written by Delaware County native Marcus Stevens. Another top moment was performing with Upper Darby Summer Stage Shooting Stars out at Rose Tree Park each summer.

“The Upper Darby Performing Arts Center is, in my opinion, the best thing about Upper Darby,” DelleMonache said. “I spend hundreds of hours in that auditorium between rehearsals for shows, choir practice, and even eating my lunch in there behind the seats — shhh ... don’t tell my teachers! I love how much emphasis Upper Darby put on theater arts. It was a place that grounded me and honestly, to an extent, raised me.”

She said the diversity in Upper Darby really helped her rise to success.

“Honestly, because Upper Darby High School is such a cultural melting pot, I always say that the school gave me so many life lessons in overall social skills and in dealing with people who are different than me,” DelleMonache said. “You would stand in the cafeteria line with people who spoke two completely different languages than you on either side of you, or you would be partnered on a school project with someone with an entirely different religious background.

“I took that for granted while I was in school. But as an adult, I see people my age just learning these types of important social lessons and skills in the workplace and I feel like UDHS students really are equipped much earlier on.”

Speaking of the cafeteria, she said the pasta line was divine.

“I sincerely daydream about the alfredo pasta they had when I was there,” she said.

There’s other memories, too: choir trips to places like Williamsburg, Boston, and New York; a trip the Upper Darby High School Encore Singers took to New Orleans to teach music to young students who lost everything after Hurricane Katrina; plus, the trips across the street after school to Dairy Queen and Perkins with friends.

She still crosses the river from time to time.



Barbara DelleMonache, a native of Upper Darby, has been named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 list. Though she now lives in New Jersey, she's often back in Delaware County and can't say enough about her childhood years. (COURTESY OF LUMINOUS 5 PHOTOGRAPHY)

"I have a large family who stretch out all around Delaware County from Broomall to Newtown Square to Media, etc.," DelleMonache said. "I'm there quite often! I actually took my 1950s-inspired engagement photos taken in the original Nifty Fifties in Folsom because Nifty Fifties forever will have my favorite french fries in the world."

Her business and the accolade

In November, *Forbes* named her to its 30 Under 30 in the Retail & E-commerce category.

Of her, they said, "Barbara DelleMonache is the founder of Curls Monthly, a subscription service geared toward curly-haired women who want to test new haircare products before committing to full-size bottles. She has leveraged her popularity on TikTok (followers: 900,000) to grow the company to projected revenues of \$1.2 million in 2023."

She's said it's a dream come true.

And, it began while she was working at her father's business in Broomall.

"There, I developed a love and knack for business and managing people," she said.

"During this time, I would get salon keratin treatments to reduce my frizz and loosen my curl pattern. After getting quite a few of these treatments, I saw an article saying they led to cancer! I immediately stopped getting the treatments and was ready to embrace my frizzy mane once and for all."

Simultaneously, hair professionals began to appear on YouTube sharing ways to unleash beautiful curls.

"However, I had a busy job at the time so it felt so daunting, overwhelming, and expensive to learn all of the science of hair just to have my hair look professional and acceptable," DelleMonache said.

Then, as she shared on her Instagram account, on the phone at 1 a.m. during COVID, "I got the idea when I was ugly crying about not knowing what I was going to do with my life while washing my hair in the shower."

The next day, she called a friend and told her she wanted to start a subscription service for other curlies to more easily find the best products suited for their type of hair.

Finding the niche

That started out with CurlVitality, a Curly Hair Coaching business.



Barbara DelleMonache is the founder of Curl Vitality. "My videos went insanely viral, and I gained 60,000 followers literally overnight and kept growing from there!" (COURTESY OF LUMINOUS 5 PHOTOGRAPHY)

“Here, hundreds of women from all over the world paid me for me to give them customized routines to help their curls go from damaged and shaggy to bouncy and healthy,” DelleMonache said. “I began marketing my services on TikTok @itsbarbiedelle, my videos went insanely viral, and I gained 60,000 followers literally overnight and kept growing from there!”

Realizing she wanted to help more people at once, she stopped coaching and created Curls Month, a curly hair subscription that sends five or more curly hair products directly to subscribers each month.

“Each product included has guides and videos made by me so there’s still that personal ‘curl coaching’ aspect,” DellDeMonache said. “After a year and a half of Curls Monthly, we have over 5,000 subscribers and made over \$1.8 million in revenue since launching. It really exploded and changed my life!”

She also noted how it wasn’t all smooth sailing while also pausing to express gratitude for those who helped her.

“We’ve had highs and lows and more moments of ‘What the heck am I doing?’ than I’d like to admit,” DelleMonache wrote on her Instagram. “I could absolutely not have done this the past 3 years without God, my husband, my team, support from my parents, counselors and coaches, and obviously YouTube 🙏”

She shared what it was like to be named to the top of *Forbes’* list.

“The moment I found out that I was on the *Forbes’* 30 Under 30 list, I screamed in my kitchen at 7:14 in the morning so loud that it woke my husband up,” DelleMonache said. “He thought I was in pain, haha! That truly was one of the happiest days of my life. I had felt like the pain and trials of being a business owner was finally paying off! Plus, if you look at the other people on the list, it’s an even bigger pinch-me moment because I was joined by NASA engineers, A-List celebrities, and Shark Tank contestants.”