

Luck be a lady tonight: Port Chester resident wins 150 grand in lottery

By Masha Rumer

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Mike and MaryEllen Ferrandino of Port Chester hold Mike's winning lottery ticket. Mike just won \$150,000 in the "King Kong Millions" New York Lottery scratch-off game.

When he came into Irv's Stationery in Port Chester on Jan. 14 to get a scratch-off ticket, Mike Ferrandino had no idea he'd leave the store \$150,000 richer.

But this assistant superintendent of a co-op building at 360 Westchester Ave., an Irv's regular since he moved to Port Chester 12 years ago, had luck smiling down on him when he bought the new "King Kong Millions" scratch-off ticket from New York Lottery, which cost him \$10.

The player scratches off the numbers on the green ticket's right side; they must match the numbers on the left to win.

"When I won, it said \$150,000 on it," Mike recalls. "I checked the back of the ticket. You guys kidding me. They said that was real. I said, alright."

Ferrandino, 40, says he's never won anything like this before, only \$100 or \$500 once in a while. "Nice little break, you know. Figure you play, you play, you play, you never win, then all of a sudden you get a break, you can't believe it!"

He rushed home to share the news with his wife MaryEllen, the super's daughter. On Tuesday—Monday was a holiday—the couple went to claim their prize from the New York Lottery Office in Fishkill.

After taxes, they got a hefty check for \$102,000, put it in the bank, and headed to Mamaroneck to celebrate with steak and fish dinners at Applebee's.

"Mike? Mike always wins," Irv's employees say to one another, pointing at the big letters written out in orange marker "We have a winner — \$150,000!"

"He comes every day faithfully, that gentleman," says Julius DeCrescenzo, store clerk. "You gotta be real lucky. He waves at the two wooden tables next to the cash register, with grooves etched into the wood, from the scratches of the coins.

The people start pouring in at 4:00 after work. By 5 p.m., a line of people hoping for instant financial gratification loops around the counter—young, old, blue collar, white-collar, of various races and nationalities.

Customers stare at the multicolored hanging rolls of lottery tickets. They shuffle, they squint, they ask for the serial number on the bottom, trying to pick out the lucky one.

Customer Frank Greco flicks his stack of dollar bills with his index finger. "No, the one on the left," he says nervously, pointing.

"Good luck," says DeCrescenzo and hands him the ticket.

John Castellano is next, a retired maintenance man who comes in with a black shaggy dog, Spawn. He's been coming here for two years, since Spawn was eight weeks old.

He buys two "Set for Life" tickets at \$10 each and takes them to the scratching table. Spawn waits.

"Nothing," he finally says, shrugging. "No big deal." Castellano wants to go on vacation, "somewhere warm, with a beach," if he wins. He'll be in again tomorrow.

DeCrescenzo points out the lottery machines and books of tickets hanging on the wall—55 different lottery games altogether in this mom and pop shop.

"Two, *two* lottery machines we have, not one, two, see?" he says, pointing to the lottery jackpot machine, which is played twice a week. "And the scratch-off machine—look, nobody has, *we* have! This is like a casino."

"They're all looking for the big one," DeCrescenzo explains. He also works for the county's sewage treatment plant in Port Chester. DeCrescenzo himself rarely plays. Now would be a good time for him to win because his daughter is getting married.

On King Kong tickets alone, Irv's makes \$2,000 a day, on average selling 200 tickets daily, says clerk Prakash "Jimmy" Solanki.

Arasela Gonzalez enters with her two kids and buys a “Win for Life Spectacular” ticket for \$10, “It Takes Two” for \$2, and “Winter Green 7’s” for \$5. Her husband’s uncle in California won \$13 million last year, she explains. She takes a pink plastic folder out of her purse, calls her two kids and marches home to scratch.

But she’s back in less than half an hour, her kids trailing behind.

“Why you give it to me and it’s no good?!” Gonzalez shakes the losing ticket at Jimmy the clerk. “Diablo! Diablo!”

But they know she’s kidding, and so she buys two more.

“When I grow up, I’m not gonna do nothing,” says her eight-year-old son Jeremy, while his mom is scratching the numbers, “cause I don’t wanna waste a lot of money.” He says that instead he wants to buy food and a car, like a Corvette, and goes looking for his sister Kiara, 2, playing with Starbursts and newspapers.

Another man comes in, buys a \$5 ticket, wins \$10, and spends all his winning money on more tickets.

But what does winner Mike Ferrandino want to do now that he *has* won the lottery?

“Hopefully when the prices come down a little bit, I plan to buy a condo,” he says. His wife MaryEllen, sporting a luscious blonde hairdo, plans to do a little shopping—get new shoes, clothes, and a couple of things for the house.

“Nothing too crazy,” Mike chuckles, “because you want to save something for the down payment.”

He hopes the real estate market will stabilize soon. Maybe he’s tired of gambling with the lottery.



Arasela Gonzalez, regular customer at Irv’s Stationery in Port Chester, buys a lottery ticket from clerks Haresh Patel, Julius DeCrescenzo and Prakash “Jimmy” Solanki.