

DINING

Woody's Diner is hot in trendy Royal Oak

BY CRISTINA FUCCO STAFF WRITER

Larry Payne had a hunch 12 years ago that if he opened a restaurant in Royal Oak it would be successful.

He was right about the city that is now a bustling center of nightclubs, art galleries, restaurants and pool halls. A Royal Oak native, Payne transformed Duggan's Irish Pub on Woodward Avenue from a 90-seat bar to a 250-seat restaurant that specializes in Big Chief hamburgers. In July 1995, he opened Payne's Woodward Inn down the street from Duggan's. His third restaurant, Woody's Diner, which opened May 1, has become the hot spot for twenty-somethings at night and a popular family restaurant during the day.

"Royal Oak is so busy down here. We've been on Woodward for quite a long time. We wanted to get involved in the different areas of Royal Oak. We're trying to get more of an upscale type of crowd," Payne explained about his move into downtown Royal Oak from the Woodward corridor.

So far, he said, he's "real happy" with his clientele. Musicians and celebrities who visit the Detroit area, as well as Detroit Red Wings like Darren McCarty make Woody's one of their regular stops.

The three-floor restaurant, on

Woody's Diner

Where: 208 W. Fifth St. in downtown Royal Oak.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Mondays through Saturdays, and noon to 1 a.m. Sundays.

More: Woody's accepts all major credit cards (Visa, American Express, Mastercard) except for Discover. For more information, call (810) 543-0911.

the site formerly occupied by Chin's jewelry store, with chef Jeff LaPointe (Charley's Crab) serves up the famous Big Chief burger as well as a full menu of rotisserie chicken and turkey, big salads that rival Elaine's favorites on "Seinfeld," sandwiches, pizzas and nachos. If customers don't like Woody's pizzas, well then they can make it themselves.

"We have a make-your-own-pizza bar and make-your-own-nachos. We'll give you the crust, you can put everything you want on it. Put it back in the (kitchen) window and go back to your table. Ten minutes later you have your pizza," Payne explained.

Payne describes Woody's as "quite a different place" built similarly to Duggan's. The three floors, each of which has 24 beer

taps, have different themes to it. The wood-paneled main floor is what Payne calls "the train floor."

"We'll have a train going all the way around (the main floor) since we're right next to the railroad tracks. We'll have crossing lights that Grand Trunk donated that will be turned on when the trains go by. We're also going to offer drink or food specials," Payne said.

From the main floor, customers can hire rickshaws to drive them around the city. The second floor is similar to Duggan's with pool tables and floor-to-ceiling windows, while the third floor is a roof-top bar that offers a nice view of downtown Royal Oak. The first and second floors have juke boxes and big-screen televisions.

Payne has made his 16-year restaurant career a family affair. He and his wife, Carol, built and opened the Long Branch Saloon in Oxford in 1980. He sold in 1984, soon after Carol died, to tap into Royal Oak's burgeoning market with Duggan's. His son, Larry Payne Jr., 29, is the bookkeeper for all three restaurants.

"He bought into this with his hard-earned money. No free ride for him. He paid his way," Payne Sr. said with a smile while his son washed the roof. "He hits every place every day. He works seven days a week. Just like his dad, he's learned to work hard."

Payne Sr.'s sisters Dottie and



A platter full: Jennifer Work holds a slab of ribs, rotisserie chicken, the Big Chief Burger and a chicken salad dinner on the roof at Woody's in Royal Oak.

Gail are his partners in Payne's Woodward Inn, formerly Pub 1881, and his other sister, Pay, is a manager. Payne's sells Susie Q fish and chips from the former restaurant of the same name, and the restaurant is working on acquiring the rights to the pizza recipe from Mario's Pizzeria, another place on Wood-

ward Avenue that closed years ago.

"We have about 176 employees for three places. We're not quite a Mr. B's yet, but we're working on it," Payne said.

The 53-year-old Oxford resident, who also has two daughters, Donna, 34, and Susie, 30, is looking at a new restaurant in

north Oakland County.

"In the old days I had a friend that owned a restaurant and I thought it would be a great life. Then I found out it would be a lot of work. It took me awhile after going from Long Branch to finally figuring out how to run a restaurant. There's no magic just long hours and hard work."

RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Send information about special dinners, new restaurants, restaurant renovations, restaurant anniversaries, and menu changes for consideration in Restaurant Specials to: Keely Wygonik, Taste! Entertainment editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Or fax information to (313) 591-7278.

WINE TASTINGS/DINNERS

• Vic's World Class Market Domestic Beer Tasting 6-9 p.m. Thursday, July 25; French Wine & Cheese Tasting, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, July 27; Vic's 1950s Tailgate Party, noon to 10 p.m. Sunday, July 28. 42875 Grand River, Novi, 6-9 p.m., (810) 305-7333.

• Genitti's Hole-in-the-Wall Celebrating 25th anniversary during July. Offering dinner theater for \$25 per person. Genitti's has added a new outdoor cafe, the marketplace offers Christmas year round. The restaurant is at 108 E. Main Street, Northville, (810) 349-0522.

• The Lark A wood-grilled Brazilian Barbecued Diner 7 p.m. Monday or Tuesday, July 29-30, 6430 Farm-

ington Road, West Bloomfield. Cost is \$75 per person, not including other beverages, tax or gratuity. Menu includes barbecued baby spareribs, leg of lamb, and beef tenderloin, Brazilian rice, black beans with garnishes. Latin rhythms will be provided by Heidi Hepler and Michele Rame. Call (810) 661-4466.

• Pike Street Restaurant Pacific West Coast Dinner 6:30 p.m. Monday, July 29, 18 West Pike Street, Pontiac, \$47.50 per person, excluding beverages, tax and gratuity, call (810) 334-7878. Five course theme dinner with optional wine package inspired by California, Washington State, Hawaii and more. Menu features Charred Ahi Tuna with Wasabi Sauce and Crispy Ginger Chips, Watercrest Salad with Citrus Oil, and Roast Loin of Lamb.

• Al's Copper Mug of Walled Lake Tent Party & Fund-raiser 2-10 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 4, co-hosted with WRIF 101 F.M. must be 21 years old or older, music by Playground, beer, Italian sausage, Chicago dogs and Hamburgers. To benefit Amanda, a second

grader who has not been able to attend school all the time because of an illness. Amanda's dream has been to be able to go to Disney World. Because her mother's resources are limited, Al's Copper Mug & WRIF would like to help raise money to make Amanda's dream come true. Amanda's condition can change for the worse at any time, so time is limited. Call (810) 624-8659 for details.

• Mon-Jin Lau Wok & Temptations, Cigar & Libations dinner co-hosted with Churchill & Merchant's Warehouse 6:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 5, Mon-Jin Lau, 1515 E. Maple Road, Troy. Cost \$75 per person, in advance. Call (810) 689-2332 for reservations/information.

• Trattoria Bruschetta Restaurant at Novi and 12 Mile Road, inside the Hotel Baronette, on the perimeter of Twelve Oaks Mall, Novi, offers a

W. Pike Street, Pontiac, (313) 334-7878. DINNER THEATER • "Just Be Patient," 7 p.m. Fridays and 6 p.m. Saturdays, Genitti's Hole-in-the-Wall 108 E. Main, Northville, (810) 349-0522, seven course meal along with show. "Just Be Patient," is a musical comedy spin-off from the hit TV series "E.R." Laugh with the characters as they involve the audience.

• Al the Only is appearing with magic at your table, 7-8 p.m. Wednesdays at Kierman's Steak House, 21931 Michigan Ave., Dearborn (313) 565-8975 and 6:30-8:30 p.m. Saturdays at Wagon Wheel Salon, 2950 Rochester Road, Troy (810) 689-8194.

• Chuck Muer's Seafood Chef's Table. Chef Frank Turner invites guests into his kitchen every Friday and Saturday evening where they can watch Turner and his staff prepare fresh Italian dishes. Chef's Table guests may dine from Trattoria's regular menu or be surprised with a chef's choice, five-course Italian Feast. Seatings at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Reservations required seven days in advance. Prices for the five-course Italian Feast begin at \$40 per person. (810) 505-5210

• A Late Summer Night 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 19, to introduce the captain of the Culinary Team Randy Emert as the new executive chef and Brian McNamara as the new general manager. Cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, music. Tickets \$25 per person, portion of proceeds go to Light-house, a foundation for abused children. The restaurant is at 18

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• Chuck Muer's Seafood

Tavern Summer lite menu in July features Croissant sandwiches, combination salad plate, Vidalia Onion, Pineapple and Gorgonzola Salad with Michigan tomatoes and Balsamic Vinegar, Chicken Caesar Sandwich, Bistro Chicken Sandwich, Angel Hair Pasta, and Fruit Plate/Sunshine Coupe, \$666 W. Maple, West Bloomfield, (610) 851-2225.



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Grand Opening KING BUFFET Chinese & International Cuisine 5071 Woodward Ave. (313) 457-8722 or 457-8733

EDDIE RABBITT CONCERT PLUS FIREWORKS JULY 28 - 8 P.M. Marshbank Park, Hiller Rd. North of Commerce Rd. West Bloomfield \$5 Admission per person at 6:00pm. Gate opens at 6:00pm. 810-334-5660

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Advertisement for 'Miss Saigon' musical. Features a large image of a woman and the text: 'ENDS SATURDAY!', 'BIG BROADWAY FLASH AND RAZZLE DAZZLE. AN UTTER TREAT!', 'CALL NOW (810) 645-6666', 'Miss Saigon', 'The classic love story of our time', 'Chrysler Series at Masquini Temple Theatre, Detroit'.

A collection of restaurant advertisements including: 'THE COMMUNITY HOUSE 380 S. BATES STREET 644-5812', 'OWO OLD WOODWARD GRILL 555 S. WOODWARD 642-9400', 'Peabody's 154 S. HUNTER 644-5222', 'OCEAN STEAKHOUSE 280 N. WOODWARD 646-7001', 'Midtown Cafe 139 S. WOODWARD 642-1133', 'PHOENICIA 588 S. WOODWARD 644-3122', 'RUGBY THE Seasonal Grill 100 TOWNSEND ST. 642-5999', 'GUIDE TO GREAT DINING BIRMINGHAM RESTAURANT COLLECTION', 'STREET STATION 243 S. STUYVE 647-7774', '220 220 WATERBURY 643-2150'.

Advertisement for Eddie Rabbitt Concert: 'Grand Opening KING BUFFET Chinese & International Cuisine 5071 Woodward Ave. (313) 457-8722 or 457-8733', 'EDDIE RABBITT CONCERT PLUS FIREWORKS JULY 28 - 8 P.M. Marshbank Park, Hiller Rd. North of Commerce Rd. West Bloomfield \$5 Admission per person at 6:00pm. Gate opens at 6:00pm. 810-334-5660'.

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