

Delivery Butler brings service to your door

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Imagine making a single phone call and having a piping hot meal ready the moment you walk in the door.

In Farmington, Farmington Hills, Livonia, Novi and Northville, that's possible, thanks to two young men whose virtually parallel lives have led them to a small office in downtown Farmington — headquarters for The Delivery Butler.

After competing against each other in high school sports and each obtaining their Master of Business Administration degrees, Jeff Jeffress and Greg Rudd met at Federal Express, where Jeff was a manager and Greg owned several trucks.

"I was the contractor and he was management," Greg said. "We met there and became friends. Actually, we became best friends."

Eventually, Greg lured Jeff into a job with the automotive industry, and over the next year, the men worked as many as 16 hours a day, talking about the future and eating a lot of take-out food.

"We spent a lot of late nights getting pizza, the same old thing," Greg said.

The partners put their heads together and started looking into the idea of a restaurant delivery and catering business, which gives customers a choice of area eateries.

"On a plane we jumped to California, to see how a lot of these companies work," Jeff said. "We met with leaders in the industry, and then came back to Detroit and launched the business."

Both Greg and Jeff quit their jobs, and became President and Vice President, respectively of Delivery Butler. They did surveys and built the business around customers' needs, Greg said.

Recruited restaurants

Rather than amass a scatter-shot group of providers, for instance, the partners have care-

fully recruited restaurants in clusters, which helps them organize their fleet of four full-time drivers. During hours of delivery (11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. weekdays and 4 p.m.-9:30 p.m. weekends), they stand ready to whisk the food orders from the kitchen to the customer's door.

Cuisine ranges from bagels and deli through Big Apple Bagels, and Thai food from Bangkok Kitchen, to the Pasta Stop's Italian dinners and Mediterranean food offered by Flaming Shish. Delivery Butler's insulated containers separate hot and cold foods, and each order is checked to ensure everything is served the way the customer orders it.

"The comment I get most often is, 'I can't believe it's this hot,'" Jeff said. "Nine times out of ten, the food is still steaming."

Drivers arrive dressed in tuxedo t-shirts and always offer to set up the meal. They'll even take off their shoes before they enter a house, Greg said. "They're always armed with extra condiments. We stress attention to detail."

A fair share of their deliveries are made to businesses, either for staff meals or catering meetings. Jeff has gone into a business in the breakfast tables for meetings or conferences.

Customers, suppliers rave

The staff at Quicken Loans in Livonia finds the Delivery Butler's services valuable, because they don't often have a "normal" lunch hour.

"It's been a positive thing for us to call them and have them do the running around for us," said staffer Todd Howell.

Local restaurants are also pleased with the service. Dave Harback, general manager of Rosa's Italian Chophouse on Farmington Road in Livonia, has been doing business with Delivery Butler since they started.

"They came in one night for dinner," Harback recalled. "It just seemed like they were



Special delivery: Jeff Jeffress and Greg Rudd are longtime friends and now business partners in The Delivery Butler, a restaurant delivery and catering service.

strong-minded individuals with a plan, and I wanted to be part of that plan."

Rosa's has changed their packaging to make it more attractive and stronger. Harback said they've even dedicated a parking spot for Delivery Butler drivers.

"We've had great feedback," he said, "and we've had customers say they've recommended us, so it's been a good working relationship."

Copies of Delivery Butler's 40-page, full color guide to participating restaurants have been

made available to local hotels as well, which guests can use as their "room service."

The partners have also begun work on a website that will be available soon. It guides customers through the ordering process and allows them to place

orders 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Because restaurants often change their menus every 90 days, the website will provide more current information about food selections, Jeff said. In addition, customers can launch a search based on their location or the type of cuisine they prefer.

"We call the customers to quote delivery times," Greg said. "Our drivers have cell phones, and they also call when they're in the area."

Delivery Butler celebrated its grand opening on Nov. 20. Neither partner seems particularly worried about launching a business in tough economic times. They're both just excited to be working toward their mutual dream.

"It's exciting and every day we're working for the idea we came up with," Jeff said.

• Delivery Butler provides service in Farmington, Farmington Hills, Novi, Northville, Northville Township and Livonia, but with a minimum order, will serve customers outside that area. For more information, or to have a copy of their menu guide delivered to your door, call 248-482-1100.

Pet-A-Pet plans Cloverdale visit

BY SUE BUCK
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A special touch. A lasting gaze.

The love communicated between pets and kids doesn't always require words, a bark or a meow. Students at Cloverdale Developmental Center will experience that lesson beginning Jan. 16, as Pet-A-Pet volunteers begin monthly visits to their school.

Cloverdale's 100 students, who have severe mental and/or multiple impairments, come from 10 surrounding school districts. Located at 33000 Freedom Road in Farmington, the center is operated by Farmington Public School district. Students range from 3 to 26 years old.

The program will be coordinated by Judy Poole, a retired South Redford Public Schools teacher for 37 years. A Novi resident, she taught kindergarten for five of those years.

"Pets are therapy," Poole said.

Accompanied by another volunteer who has two dogs, she will bring Chelsea, her six-year-old Cocker Spaniel, which she described as a rare breed. The dog is a Scottish and Sealyham terrier mix, obtained from a breeder in Dresden, Ohio. The breeder met Poole at a Monroe rest area to show her Chelsea's mom and three siblings.

Poole selected Chelsea just in time for Father's Day in 1995.

"There's not very many of these dogs in the United States," she said.

Poole also makes monthly visits to Haworth Center, an assisted living center located at 30225 13 Mile Road, in Farmington Hills.

The group is always looking for volunteers to become special visitors. Pet owners are asked to contribute about an hour of their time once a month.

Pets should be friendly, well-behaved and have cur-

rent vaccination records. They are usually kept on a leash, unless visits are in an enclosed room, Poole said.

Since its inception in 1986, the Pet-A-Pet program has grown to include more than 400 volunteers who visit more than 70 facilities in the metropolitan Detroit area, said Ruth Curry, a longtime volunteer who lives in Redford Township. They include schools, nursing homes, and psychiatric centers.

"Many studies in recent years have shown that interaction with animals changes lives, both physically and emotionally," Curry said. "Patients show a significant increase in confidence, self esteem, motivation and cooperation, as well as a decrease in anxiety levels and blood pressure."

Kids respond especially well. "You can see a light in their eyes," Curry said. "It's very touching."

The Pet-A-Pet group is also offering for sale, "You Have a Visitor" by Renee Lamm Esordi. The book studies animal-assisted therapy and is a photographic journal of Esordi's experience with programs in several parts of the country.

Esordi spent two weeks with Pet-A-Pet volunteers in the Detroit area and devoted two chapters in her book to the work done by this volunteer group. She recorded visits to St. Anne's Mead, a Southfield nursing home; Camp Oakland Girls' and Boys' Ranch in Oxford; Woodhaven, a Livonia nursing home; Presbyterian Village, a Redford Township nursing home; the rehabilitation center at Garden City Hospital; Cleveland School in Livonia; Children's Hospital; Sinai-Grace Hospital in Detroit and Faith Haven, a Jackson nursing home.

To become a volunteer or purchase the book, priced at \$30, call Curry at (313)535-0410.

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