

At Obee's, fresh makes difference

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

At Obee's Soups Salads and Subs, fresh is apparently the business' keyword.

It's not like some places that have ingredients thawed for consumption after spending freeze time on a semi-truck, said Raj Reddy, owner of the recently opened shop on Farmington Road, north of 12 Mile in the corner shopping plaza next to Little Caesar's pizza.

While the Obee's in Farmington Hills is the only franchise in Michigan so far, Reddy said he has plans to help other people reach their American Dream by running their own business, placing Obee's sub shops across Michigan.

He said the president and founder of the franchise, James E.A. Patrick, and his wife Mary moved from Lansing to Port Charlotte, Fla., in 1995 to enjoy the warm climate and to relax. After a few months of enjoying the good life, Jim decided it was time to start a new business after spend years owning small business operations.

"I was the second to franchise outside of Florida," said Reddy. That was last December, and 24 people have followed suit by opening their own franchises across the U.S., he said.

What makes the sub shop special is the meats are sliced up fresh, just like in a deli. "We don't pre-slice the meat," he said. "We use low-fat ingredients and even the cheese is sliced in front of you."

Unlike some fast food chains, the dough for the bread is not frozen. "We don't use preservatives (for the Italian bread) so what we don't use we throw away," he said. "It's made fresh every morning."

There are 16 different varieties of subs that come in 16- and 8-inch sizes. The capicola, an aged ham with spices, is

a popular choice just by itself, said Reddy.

"The most popular sub is the 'Gut-buster,' he said.

"We make it to order, so if a person just wants meat, we'll give it to them," said Reddy.

The subs come in the usually popular choices of Italian, tuna, turkey and salami, said Reddy. Freshly prepared salads and soups are also made daily, he said.

Reddy said he heads to the Eastern Market in Detroit twice a week to pick up fresh produce. And another food service provides fresh meats and cheeses to the business, and they are displayed in coolers just like at a deli. Reddy owns the rights for Michigan franchises, he said, and wants to help others open their own shops.

"I can help with anything," he said of an eager entrepreneur. "We have a base list of contractors and suppliers and we can work with realtors."

He said the average investment is between \$89,000-\$116,000 and that getting a bank loan is usually not a problem.

He and his wife, Kavitha, each have a master's degree in business from their native homeland of India. They came to the U.S. about five years ago and Reddy said he loves living in the Farmington Hills area after spending some time on the East Coast. The sub shop even makes deliveries to businesses within a 2-mile radius, Reddy said.

And Obee's plans to continue being a part of the community. Already the business donated to an All Night Senior Party and sponsors the NFWB Cobras youth baseball team.

Call Obee's at (248) 489-8880; for franchise information, call Reddy at (248) 249-0379. The Obee's in Farmington Hills is open from 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Friday and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday.

pace@oe.com | (248) 477-5450



PHOTOS BY BILL BRELLER/OBSERVER
Anita and Raj Reddy are the proprietors of Obee's soup, salad and subs.



Anita Reddy slices fresh meats and cheeses for each sub.

TUTORS

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inator Dana Reiman are the only paid staff members. FYA also boasts more than 80 active volunteers. In addition to adults, National Honor Society students from area high schools can accomplish their community service requirements through the program.

Over the past three years, the board of directors has also grown, from seven people to 25. Board members serve on or chair committees for projects like the annual report, newsletter, summer camp and special events like the annual youth recognition breakfast.

The need for volunteers has grown with the need for the program, Hoffman said.

"Our caseload is up about 30 percent," she said, adding referrals come from schools, courts, police and parents. "We are a prevention program. We usually see kids for about six months."

Issues like a divorce, moving or the death or illness of a parent can send a child spiraling into negative behavior or depression. Caseworkers counsel kids who have been convicted of retail fraud, alcohol-related crimes or drug possession, work with truancy issues and provide support for kids whose grades are falling.

FYA serves about 100 families at all times, in Farmington, Farmington Hills and the Clarencville School District.

"We have a 94 percent success rate," Hoffman pointed out. "Kids who come through our program will not come back again."

The key lies in coming up with plan that encompasses all aspects of the child's life, work with community, school, home and their personal life. FYA provides scholarships for kids who are interested in taking music, dance or sports lessons.

"The kids write a letter to the committee, which considers their application," Hoffman said. "We've helped kids go to the National Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C....we've helped parents pay for two kids to travel with a premier choir."

The program also provides kids with scholarships to camp, as well as a summer day camp

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that served nearly 180 children over seven weeks at East Middle School. In addition to three field trips each week, kids had all kinds of activities to keep them busy, including a drama program spearheaded by volunteer Julie Devine and her niece, Heather.

Like every other FYA program, the summer camp is also growing.

"Last year, we only had 60 kids," Reiman pointed out. The demand also creates wear and tear on equipment, which needs to be replaced. Once a year, FYA sends out letters requesting donations and donations are also solicited by word-of-mouth to contacts with area businesses.

"There's a lot of angels in Farmington," Hoffman said. "It's a wonderful community."

The program is also seeking mentors, particularly men, who are willing to give a little more time toward being a part of a child's life. Volunteers have to undergo a background check and one day of training, and are asked to contribute at least two hours a week for a year. FYA provides tickets to events and activities for the mentors and kids to share.

"It shouldn't cost anything," Hoffman said. "They're looking for a relationship. We have a lot of kids who need that extra relationship."

To learn more about Farmington Youth Assistance or to volunteer, call (248) 489-3434.

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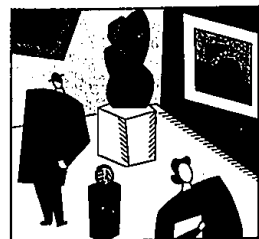
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