

# Local business mixes Picasso with pastrami

BY PHIL FOLEY  
STAFF WRITER

Allen Attee may not be an artist, but he knows what his likes, and more importantly what works.

What seems to work at Attee's fledgling business on Grand River Avenue near Haggerty Road is art and it all started with a cup of decaf coffee.

Barbara Murphy, a retired Livonia school teacher from Novi, was returning from Providence Hospital and Medical Centers' Novi campus where she was receiving treatment for the heart condition that forced her retirement last spring when she spotted the Picasso Cafe. An aspiring artist herself, Murphy decided to step in the deli for a cup of decaf coffee with her friend because

of the name. Attee's Picasso Cafe features sandwiches with names like the Picasso Turkey Abstract, The Da Vinci Turkey-Bacon and the Van Gogh Corned Beef. Attee said he chose the name Picasso Cafe "because I like his art." With the name in place, "everything rolled together, like the names of sandwiches," the Farmington Hills resident added. While having coffee in the deli with her friend, Murphy decided "it would be a nice safe place to display art." So before she left, "I asked Allen if he would be interested in showing local art work and he said, 'Okay.'"

Murphy got together with fellow members of the 38-year-old Farmington Art Club and now Attee has an artist a month booked into the deli through the end of next year. "It works well," said Attee. "It

changes the decor every month and the artists tell their friends and family."

It works so well that Attee and his partners — father, Gerry; and brother, Michael — are looking at locations in Detroit, Clarkston, Milford and Brighton. They're also working to create a franchise package.

The Novi Picasso Cafe is the Attee's second venture into the deli trade. Attee's father bought a small sundry shop at Dominos Farms after retiring from General Motors Corp. and it evolved into a deli. Attee helped out while earning his degree in finance and economics at the University of Michigan.

Attee said hanging around Dominos Farms with all its corporate attorneys and franchise specialists was also like graduate school.

"After I graduated dad asked, 'Do want corporate job or do you want to try our own little adventure.'" Attee took a pass on an offer to join a consulting firm and now he runs the Novi operation, while his brother runs the Ann Arbor location and his father serves more as mentor. While conceding that a degree in finance and economics does not sound like the best fit for a business wrapped around food and art, Attee noted "good business practices are pretty much the same, give good service, cut costs and get the most for your dollar."

Attee said that while he didn't know if the Picasso Cafe concept would fly when he first opened, "I knew what I service I wanted to offer. The 72-seat, 2,800-square-foot deli offers five soups, 30 sandwiches and eight to nine salads every day.

Attee said he thinks Picasso Cafe will eventually translate well as a franchise operation.

"The art varies in different communities," he said, but the basic premise works. He added, "What I've found is that I end up doing minimal amount of work because the artists so enthused."

Murphy said that because Attee "showcases very nicely" art charges substantially less than most galleries or art shows. Murphy said that while most juried art shows take 30 percent of an artwork's sale price and galleries take as much as half, Attee takes only a 15 percent commission.

"I'm not planning on drawing any profits from the art" said Attee, "We are still primarily a deli." He said the commission essentially covers his costs for displaying the art, adding that

while his customers do buy some of the art, it's not flying off the walls.

A year after first approaching Attee about displaying local art, Murphy is finally getting to displaying her watercolors and charcoal drawings in the deli.

Murphy, who has done 15 juried art shows and seven one-woman shows in the last two years, said she's thrilled to be displaying at the Picasso Cafe. "It's very hard for artists to get in galleries. There are not enough anywhere. There are tons of artists and no place to show their stuff," she said.

In another three years or so when Attee starts rolling out his franchises, that could change.

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## BUSINESS NEWS

**ePrize picks Marx Layne**

Farmington Hills-based ePrize, LLC, a global leader of incentive relationship marketing, announced today that Marx Layne & Company has been named public relations agency of record for its company. The announcement was made by ePrize CEO Josh Linkner.

Founded in 1987, Farmington Hills-based Marx Layne & Company is among the Midwest's leading independently owned public relations agencies. ePrize, LLC develops online sweepstakes, direct-marketing programs and chance-to-win promotions to help corporate clients with customer acquisition and retention.

The company uses its suite of promotional technology soft-

ware to help clients attract new visitors to Web sites, increase retention and build long-term online customer relationships. Headquartered in Farmington Hills, ePrize has offices in Los Angeles, New York and Boston and represents more than 250 clients worldwide. To date, ePrize has administered more than 600 successful promotions for clients such as General Electric, MasterCard, Adidas, United Airlines, Kimberly Clark and General Motors. More information on ePrize can be found at [www.eprize.net](http://www.eprize.net)

**Planning Edge**

When asked which brands were best positioned to sell Crossover Utility Vehicles (CUVs), respondents in a study

from Farmington Hills-based The Planning Edge indicated Toyota, Ford, Honda and Chevrolet.

Lexus, Jeep, GMC, Nissan, and BMW followed this group.

The Planning Edge forecasts strong growth in the CUV market from the current level of 1.4 million to 2.9 million units by 2007. In addition, while the

CUV products offered by some companies will be limited, future sales are critical to such brands as Subaru, Mercury, Saturn and Buick whose products are more niche-oriented or whose product lines are being redefined. According to consumers, brands perceived as offering good fuel economy include Saturn, Honda,

Hyundai, Kia and Volvo. Brands that provide products that consumers believe handle well on the road include Nissan, Mitsubishi, Mazda, Acura and BMW. The Planning Edge defines CUVs as front-wheel-drive vehicles that combine the attributes of both cars and trucks. CUVs are divided into five sub-segments: Hatch,

Wagon, Small, Mid-Size and Luxury. The two studies (The Future of Crossover Utility Vehicles and Brand Positioning of Crossover Utility Vehicles) include both industry analysis from the company's extensive expertise on the topic and quantitative analysis, which was derived from the responses of over 3,500 participants.

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