



## American Recruiters

“Your link to the Future”

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### NEWS LETTER FOR MAY 7, 2007

You asked for it, and now you will have it!

American Recruiters Global Newsletter for the Foodservice Industry  
May 7, 2007

Greetings to All my Good Friends, Colleagues and Industry Supporters!

I have always enjoyed writing the newsletter because it allows our industry to get the “lighter side” of the news in a very informal one-on-one with the readers. Its success has been awesome only because all of you, at some point or another, have contributed information to include in the newsletter. Please continue to do so! Promotions and people ‘rumor reports,’ trade show, conferences and seminar news, company acquisitions and sales, buy-outs and close-outs, association information: All are Welcome!

**Please send me all contributions to: [mschacher@arcimail.com](mailto:mschacher@arcimail.com)**

Thanks, and receive my best regards,

Mario Schacher

### Qdoba in the Spotlight

Qdoba Mexican Grill hopes to stand out with at least 80 more restaurants in 2007. Qdoba Mexican Grill is in the middle of an ambitious expansion that company executives say make the chain's prospects as hot as its new ancho chile barbecue pork burrito. The Wheat Ridge-based fast-casual chain, which has 354 restaurants in 42 states, plans to open at least 80 more this year. "We don't see any slowing in the momentum anytime soon," said Gary Beisler, who has been president and chief executive of Qdoba since 1999. The company has financial help from hamburger chain Jack in the Box, which purchased Qdoba in 2003 for \$45 million. "They're a great partner because they bring us buying power," Beisler said. "It doesn't hurt to have a very successful public company as your big brother, but we operate very independently." In fiscal 2006, on top of adding 71 new stores, Qdoba posted a 5.9 percent increase in same-store sales, according to regulatory filings. Its revenues grew to \$74.9 million, up from \$58.4 million in fiscal 2005. Qdoba's growth is fueled in part by its aggressive franchising strategy. As of last year, only about 22 percent of Qdoba stores were company-owned. Plans call for adding 75-plus stores annually for the foreseeable future. "Franchise growth can be a lot easier because it's not as capital intense," said local restaurant consultant John Imbergamo. "But

it is more difficult to control your product and service in franchise stores." But even with its solid growth, one industry analyst predicted that Qdoba will always be in the shadow of the other Denver-based burrito chain, Chipotle Mexican Grill. Chipotle, founded in 1993, has about 600 restaurants - the vast majority of which are company-owned - and plans to open at least 95 more this year. Arjun Sen, president of the Highlands Ranch-based Restaurant Marketing Group, said he believes Chipotle's heavy promotion of its farm-raised meats and organic vegetables over the past few years has helped to raise its profile with consumers. "Whereas Chipotle is trying to define themselves, Qdoba is falling more into the 'me too' category," he said. "As this segment becomes more and more huge, (Qdoba) is going to become like the Burger King of the world, never the McDonald's." Fast-food giant McDonald's Corp. purchased a majority stake in Chipotle in 1999 but spun it off last year in a highly successful initial public offering. "We compete extremely well with (Chipotle); we respect them," Beisler said. "And yet we feel like we have a different approach to our consumer." Jack in the Box has no plans to spin off Qdoba or take it public, according to Beisler. "They're very pleased with us and our performance," he said. "There is no meaningful reason to consider a sale or an IPO." Beisler acknowledged that Qdoba, which recently hired Denver-based GroundFloor Media as its national public-relations agency, is less aggressive in its PR strategy than Chipotle. "We try to be low-key," Beisler said. "We could go out and scream to the world that we're opening all these restaurants, but we're not flashy. Qdoba believes its extensive menu helps differentiate it from competitors, said Beisler. "We're a Mexican grill, not just a big-burrito place," he said. "Our goal is to be the franchiser of choice because we have the concept, the management, the operating system - and, most importantly, we have the food."

Source: Qdoba Mexican Grill

## **Big Mac Drives Strong Profit**

McDonald's Corp. gave a first-quarter earnings outlook above analysts' expectations, citing strength of new U.S. products such as Snack Wrap chicken sandwiches and growth in Europe and Asia. The world's largest restaurant company also reported a rise of 8.2 percent in March sales at restaurants open at least 13 months. Four analysts on average had been expecting a rise of 3.6 percent, according to research notes. McDonald's said it expected to report first-quarter earnings of about 62 cents per share, while analysts on average had forecast 57 cents, according to Reuters Estimates. The company's shares rose 1.9 percent to \$47.50 in early electronic trading. McDonald's outlook includes a 1-cent-per-share benefit from foreign currency translation and reflects a tax rate of about 30 percent. March same-store sales rose 6.2 percent in the United States, 11.2 percent in Europe, and 9.6 percent in the company's Asia-Pacific business, it said. Initiatives such as a focus on breakfast and extended restaurant hours have been key to revitalizing performance at McDonald's U.S. business over the last three years. Most recently, the chicken Snack Wrap introduced last year has proven to be a blockbuster. McDonald's said its U.S. business also benefited from the "everyday affordability" of its menu, which drove customers to its restaurants. The European business has also undergone a turnaround in the last year, helped by the company's strategy of combining higher-priced

products with cheaper selections on its menu. France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Russia led growth in the region. First-quarter system wide sales, which include sales at all restaurants, including franchised locations and those run by affiliates, rose 10.3 percent, while same-store sales increased 6.3 percent. Quarterly same-store sales were up 4.4 percent in the United States, 8 percent in Europe and 8.5 percent in the Asia-Pacific region.

Source: Reuters

## **CresCor Promotes Dave Vuichich to International Director**

In an effort to expand its global presence, **CresCor** has announced the appointment of **Dave Vuichich, CFSP** to the position of Director of International Sales and Marketing. Dave has been the Director of Engineering since 1994 and has also managed the International portion of the business since 2003. Dave is a former member of the NAFEM Technical Liaison Committee and is a current member of the International Committee and the Northern Ohio District Export Council.

## **Grill Concepts Opens Doors in Birthplace of Rock 'n Roll, in Memphis' Beale Street Entertainment District**

Grill Concepts, Inc. announced the opening of its newest Daily Grill restaurant in Memphis, Tennessee, adjacent to the city's premier entertainment venue. The Memphis Daily Grill, housed in the Westin Beale Street Hotel, has its own entrance, inviting guests directly from the streets of the Beale Street entertainment district, Tennessee's top tourist attraction, and the nearby FedEx Forum, home of the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies. The 200-seat, 6,500 square foot restaurant serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and also provides room service for guests of the 203-room property. "We look forward to introducing our classic, made-from-scratch American cuisine concept to the people of Memphis," said Philip Gay, Grill Concepts' chief executive officer. "Memphis is home to Elvis Presley and the birthplace of multiple music genres, along with countless cultural hotspots that make it the ideal city for furthering the development of the Daily Grill brand. "Memphis represents our first restaurant opening of 2007, with additional openings planned for the remainder of this year, including locations in Seattle and Austin, as part of an accelerated expansion program," Gay added.

Source: About Grill Concepts, Inc.

## **Outback Finds Its President at Bonfish Grill**

OSI Restaurant Partners Inc. has hired another president for its Outback Steakhouse brand, this time from within its system. Jeff Smith takes over as president, succeeding Curt Glowacki, who resigned in March after just three months on the job. Smith began his career with OSI in 1989, training at the original Outback Steakhouse restaurant on Henderson Boulevard in Tampa. Most recently he was vice president of national

operations for Bonefish Grill. Smith has worked with Paul Avery, chief operating officer of OSI, since 1989 when Avery was managing partner of an Outback unit in Palm Harbor. Smith will be the third person to hold the position of president in just nine months. The Outback brand has suffered from sagging sales for more than a year. It provides nearly 70 percent of the company's worldwide sales. OSI is in the middle of a move to go private, and is waiting for stockholder approval of the plan at the upcoming stockholder meeting May 8. Co-founders Chris Sullivan, Robert Basham and Tim Gannon are in line to collect \$325 million from the buy-out.

Source: Tampa Bay Business Journal

## **Ruth's Chris Steak House, Inc. to Acquire Three Franchised Restaurants in the Pacific Northwest**

Ruth's Chris Steak House, Inc. announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire three franchised restaurants located in Bellevue and Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon. The total purchase price of \$13.25 million, including non-compete agreements, will be financed through borrowings under the Company's revolving credit facility. As a result of this transaction, which is expected to close in July 2007, the Company will have a contiguous company-operated restaurant presence on the West Coast. Craig S. Miller, Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer of Ruth's Chris Steak House, Inc., commented, "Today's announcement marks our second franchise acquisition in a year and reflects another step forward for our Company. Collectively, these restaurants generated an average sales volume of approximately \$5.3 million and we look forward to assimilating them into our Company-owned system. In addition to accretion in year one, today's acquisition also opens up these markets to Company-owned development." In addition, the Company reiterates expected full year 2007 diluted earnings per share, on a GAAP basis, of between \$1.05 and \$1.09. Upon the closing of the transaction, the Company will revisit expected full year 2007 guidance as it relates to the impact of this acquisition.

Source: Ruth's Chris Steak House, Inc.

## **10 AFEHC Companies to Exhibit at the 2007 Edition of NRA**

Ten AFEHC member companies will take part in the NRA show that will be held from the 19th to the 22nd of May, in McCormick Place, Chicago, Illinois, USA. This eleventh joint participation coordinated by the AFEHC will cover an area of 2800 Sq Ft and will be represented by the following companies: FAGOR INDUSTRIAL (cooking equipment, laundry, commercial refrigeration and dishwashing); LINEA BLANCA (dishwashers, glass washers and ice cube machines); ROLL DRAP (cotton textile items for hostelry such as napkins, cloths and aprons); ICC (last generation cooking equipment); ITV-ICE MAKERS (ice making machines); JEMI (dishwashing); QUALITY ESPRESSO

(espresso coffee machines); RESTAURA TECHNOLOGY (automatic fryers); ZUMMO (automatic citrus-fruit juicers) and ZUMMOVAL (automatic citrus-fruit juicers). The promotional activities organized by AFEHC include the publication of a brochure containing information on the Spanish companies in the joint participation. This brochure will be sent to the registered visitors before the event and will be also distributed in the association booth.

## **Pinstripes Celebrates the “Grand Opening” of its Bowling/Bocce/Bistro Concept Unique Entertainment/Dining Venue Opens in Northbrook, IL**

Pinstripes Inc., a distinctive bowling/bocce/bistro concept, opened its 45,000 square foot indoor/outdoor entertainment and dining facility at 1150 Willow Road, Northbrook, IL on April 29. The company plans to redefine the entertainment and dining experience by offering communities and surrounding businesses an opportunity to have “sophisticated fun” in a facility that will include eighteen bowling lanes, six indoor/outdoor bocce courts, an Italian/American bistro and wine cellar, event space/party rooms accommodating 20-600, and a year-round outdoor patio and fireplace. Its flagship location is in the newly developed Willow-Festival lifestyle shopping center at the intersection of Willow and Waukegan roads. “We look forward to introducing a ‘winning combination’ of sophisticated fun to a wide spectrum of consumers,” says Dale Schwartz, Founder/CEO. “The entire facility will be full-service, allowing guests to enjoy exceptional cuisine and wines amongst the ‘fun’ atmosphere of bowling and bocce. Pinstripes will go ‘back to the future’ and offer people an alternative way to connect with each other and have fun.” In anticipation of its opening, Pinstripes assembled a passionate and talented management team with significant restaurant and event/banquet experience, including: Chris Soukup, general manager; Mark Grimes, executive chef; and Sandie Montgomery, event director. This seasoned team will apply their respective skills to Pinstripes’s novel hybrid concept, and are joined by more than 150 talented team members who have been hired and trained over the last several months. “We have been working together on the Pinstripes concept for over two-years. Our vision is to integrate the games of bowling and bocce with exceptional cuisine, maintaining a strict adherence to high quality service throughout the venue,” says Schwartz. Pinstripes will accentuate the duality of bocce and bowling by featuring Italian/American cuisine, Italian and American wines, and gelato and ice cream. In addition, the company has combined the standard open-play of bowling/bocce/dining with a substantial focus on private events, and to date, more than 100 private events have been pre-booked by its event sales team. In celebration of its opening, Pinstripes sponsored a Grand Opening Community Art Contest, and much of the artwork featured in the venue is by local artists. Moreover, Pinstripes is donating a scholarship to the International Center on Deafness and the Arts in honor of the opening. With its flagship location in Northbrook, Pinstripes has enjoyed the support of the local communities, and the Village of Northbrook, in particular, was extraordinarily helpful during the development and construction process. “We welcome Pinstripes to the Village of Northbrook, and we are excited to share this very special and

unique community venue with others around us,” says Gene Marks, Village President of Northbrook.

Source: Kurman Communications, Inc.

## **Denny’s Names Mark Chmiel Senior Vice President, Concept Innovation**

Denny’s announced the appointment of Mark Chmiel to the new position of Senior Vice President, Concept Innovation. Chmiel’s position becomes effective immediately. In the position, Chmiel assumes responsibility for identifying strategic business opportunities and managing projects designed to drive sales and evolve the Denny’s trademark to new categories of business. The overall objective is to further strengthen the Denny’s brand, building upon the foundation of the company’s significant improvement in operations and capital structure over the last few years. Nelson J. Marchioli, Denny’s President and Chief Executive Officer, said, “Mark’s position with Denny’s is a milestone in our development. The Denny’s concept has grown throughout our history, but Mark will play a defining role in helping us identify and realize new opportunities that transcend the traditional practice of building restaurants and enhancing service. We expect the impact of this new role will be substantial in terms of both strategy and sales.” Chmiel most recently served as Chief Marketing Strategist for Fresh Enterprises, Inc. and the Baja Fresh division of Wendy’s International, Inc. With more than 25 years of experience in the food and beverage industry, Chmiel has led numerous strategic positioning and business development initiatives for companies, including Chi-Chi’s Mexican, Burger King, KFC, Dr Pepper, 7UP, M&M Mars and American Home Foods. He will be based at Denny’s corporate headquarters in Spartanburg, S.C.

Source: Denny’s/ Business Wire

## **Bob Evans Farms Announces Closing of 11 Bob Evans Restaurants**

Bob Evans Farms, Inc. announced that it closed 11 Bob Evans Restaurants. The restaurant properties are located in Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia. The company intends to sell the parcels. Steve Davis, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Bob Evans Farms, Inc., commented, "It is always a difficult decision for us to close restaurants, but the financial performance of these restaurants contributed to the decision to close these locations during our fourth quarter. Bob Evans enjoys strong brand loyalty across 18 states, and we remain committed to building the concept in areas that will be beneficial to our customers and the overall financial performance of the company. We still plan to build five new restaurants in fiscal 2008." "We understand that our employees at those restaurants strive to give their best everyday, and I applaud them for the job they've done. All of the employees at the affected units will be given the opportunity to transfer to one of our other restaurants," said Davis. Bob Evans Farms, Inc. owns and operates 580 full-service,

Bob Evans Restaurants in 18 states primarily located in the Midwest, mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions of the United States. In addition, the company operates 110 Mimi's Cafe casual restaurants located in 19 states, primarily in California and other western states. Bob Evans Farms, Inc. is also a leading producer and distributor of pork sausage and a variety of complementary homestyle convenience food items under the Bob Evans and Owens brand names.

Source: Bob Evans Farms, Inc.

## **RARE Hospitality International Appoints Cathy D. Hampton as Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary**

RARE Hospitality International, Inc. announced the appointment of Cathy D. Hampton as the Company's Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary. Ms. Hampton was previously Vice President and Assistant General Counsel for EarthLink, Inc. and General Counsel and Secretary for EarthLink's PeoplePC subsidiary. She also held prior corporate counsel positions with Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. and the National Basketball Association. She began her legal career as an attorney with the New York law firm of Shearman and Sterling after graduating from Spelman College and Harvard Law School. "We are so pleased to announce that Cathy Hampton will be joining RARE's leadership team," remarked Philip J. Hickey, Jr., RARE's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. "We look forward to working with her to achieve our goals for profitable growth and increased shareholder value." RARE Hospitality International, Inc. currently owns, operates and franchises 338 restaurants, including 279 LongHorn Steakhouse restaurants, 27 Capital Grille restaurants and 30 Bugaboo Creek Steak House restaurants.

Source: RARE Hospitality International, Inc.

## **FOCUS Brands to Acquire Moe's Southwest Grill**

Center-of-the-Plate Concept to Join Sister Companies Carvel® Ice Cream, Cinnabon®, Schlotzsky's®, and Seattle's Best Coffee® International. FOCUS Brands, an Atlanta-based franchisor, announced that through a subsidiary, it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Moe's Southwest Grill, a fast-casual restaurant chain offering fresh Southwest favorites, including burritos, quesadillas, and fajitas, in a quirky, fun atmosphere from certain affiliates of Raving Brands. Headquartered in Atlanta, Moe's has 345 locations in 36 states generating nearly \$300 million of annual system-wide revenues. FOCUS Brands is the franchisor and operator of over 1,750 ice cream stores, bakeries, sandwich shops, and cafes in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 33 foreign countries under the brand names Carvel®, Cinnabon®, Schlotzky's®, and the franchisor of Seattle's Best Coffee® on military bases and in certain international markets. Including Moe's, FOCUS Brands will have five franchise brands generating over \$1 billion in annual system-wide revenues through over 10,000 points of distribution in 50 states and 33 countries. Steve Romaniello, president and CEO of FOCUS Brands, comments, "With its friendly 'Welcome to Moe's!' greeting and its

high quality, freshly made products, Moe's Southwest Grill is a welcome addition to our growing portfolio of brands." Raving Brands President Stephen M. LaMastra adds, "The Moe's brand, our franchisees, and our associates will all benefit greatly from the resources and expertise of Atlanta-based FOCUS Brands. I am looking forward to a long and productive partnership where the best from each organization is identified and shared to everyone's benefit." Further terms of the agreement were not disclosed. The transaction is expected to close during the summer.

Source: FOCUS Brands Inc./BUSINESS WIRE

## **New president for Papa Murphy's**

Clarice Turner has been appointed president and chief operating officer of Papa Murphy's International. The Vancouver-based company is the world's largest and fastest-growing take-and-bake pizza chain. Turner, a 16-year veteran of the Yum Brands, joins the senior management team led by John Barr, chief executive officer. "We are excited about Clarice joining our senior management team, bringing to Papa Murphy's her strong background and broad experiences in the quick-service restaurant industry," Barr said in a press release. At Yum Brands, Turner moved up through a variety of management positions in its Taco Bell Corp. subsidiary. She most recently led national initiatives to improve Taco Bell systems, processes and new products. She also worked with Taco Bell siblings KFC, Pizza Hut and Long John Silvers.

Source: Portland Business Journal

## **Looking for a Job? Contemplating making a career move?**

If you are thinking about changing jobs, or even professions, it is imperative to up-date your resume. For decades, we were taught that you can tell all there is say about ourselves on one page because employers and human resources executives could tell all about you in one page. Things always seem to be changing, and the rules for preparing resumes are also part of it. A recent study of 150 senior executives done by Accutemps shows that the preferable length of resumes is now two pages. This survey compared resumes presented in 1996 and in 2006. Almost 50% of the resumes received in 2006 were two pages in length. Whether the resume is one or two pages, remember to include all pertinent information about your professional career, including accomplishments, and always keep the information short and to the point.

## **Four New SHAKEY'S® to Open In the Los Angeles Area**

Shakey's USA announced the grand re-opening of four new concept restaurants in the Los Angeles county area through July. The Alhambra, Hollywood-Sunset, Pico Rivera and Huntington Park restaurants will receive an extreme makeover as part of CEO Tim Pulido's five-year plan to shake up and revitalize the nostalgic heritage of the Shakey's brand. Pulido's plan makes provisions for an all-new logo, menu, and store designs for all

Shakey's USA corporate locations as well as franchisees that choose to absorb the expense of the refurbishments. While Shakey's new look and menu offerings reflect the shift in this country's attitudes toward style and health, the refined concept also embraces Shakey's iconic American 53-year heritage. "After all these years, Shakey's is definitely on the right track! The remodels are fantastic," Said Nizar Patel, owner of Shakey's Pizza Parlor in Palmdale, CA. "When I stepped into the newly remodeled location in Alhambra, I was pleasantly surprised—it far exceeded my expectations." Construction on the Alhambra store was complete April 1, 2007. The grand re-opening event is set for April 26, 2007. By 2008 Pulido plans to have remodeled all remaining corporate stores, 15 franchise stores, and develop 12 additional new stores in Southern California and other select markets. "Franchise owners have been waiting for this kind of stewardship for a long time. Tim's plan has gotten me so excited that I am preparing to remodel my own restaurant as well as opening two new locations," said Dean Chi, Owner of Shakey's Pizza Parlor in Upland, CA "Words can not express how excited I am about this new era of Shakey's." "Shakey's is very much in tune with the changing culture of 'family time' and understands that families today seem to have less and less of it every day," said Tim Pulido, CEO, Shakey's USA. "And while we're excited about our all new premium ingredients, we're even more thrilled to offer lighter, healthier alternatives like salad and trans fat-free fried foods, adding even more value to family meal time."

Source: Shakey's USA/NewsWire

## **French Pavillion Premiers at NRA Show in May**

For the first time, a French pavilion showcasing nine of the France's most dynamic kitchen equipment companies will be at the NRA Show, May 19 to 22 at McCormick Place in Chicago. Organized by the French association of catering equipment (SYNEG), the pavilion, at booth number 3441 in South Hall A, will present the latest high-performance cooking equipment designed for bakeries, bars, collective kitchens, restaurants, and other professional kitchens. The equipment to be presented covers nearly the entire process from cutlery, countertop preparation equipment, cooking suites, and espresso machines. This is the first time that these eight French companies will be exhibiting together on a collective pavilion at the NRA show, where in previous years, French companies exhibited individually. France is not only famous for its cuisine but also for its equipment, which allows chefs all over the world to cook the way they want. The European-built equipment is not only extremely reliable but also passes strict safety and security regulations required by tough European laws. The most dynamic and prestigious French companies will be present as well as complementary products for preparation, distribution, refrigeration, and other equipment all connected with the same purpose. The following companies will be present on the French pavilion: Bonnet designs and manufactures the Maestro line of cooking suites for high-volume kitchens that combining precision-power and quick-cooking units for better kitchen organization and design. UNIC changed the face of the espresso world by creating the first fully automatic espresso machine and today produces a wide range of espresso equipment for large kitchens and small caterers alike. Santos produces countertop electrical appliances for commercial kitchens including coffee grinders, juicers, ice crushers, mixers, and

vegetable slicers. Tellier manufactures a large range of small tools for kitchen professionals that chop, grate, juice, peel, puree, mix, mince, or slice, and other supplies such as cutting boards and coffee makers. Crêpes de France makes electric- or gas-powered crêpe griddles, refrigerated batter dispensers, crêpe spatulas and rakes, and other related accessories available separately or as complete concepts. Gobel manufactures a wide range of pastry molds, fusing its 100-plus-year tradition and modern design and manufacturing techniques. Fischer-Castet specializes in professional, easy-to-use sharpening tools and supplies for demanding users such as butchers, caterers, and chefs. Déglon designs and produces fine cutlery, handheld kitchen tools, and mounting assemblies. FORGE DE LAGUIOLE manufactures unique hand-made "Laguiole" knives. Since 1829, this elegant knife has been recognized and appreciated throughout the world for its exceptional cutting edge.

Source: The French Technology Press Office

## **Planet Hollywood to Open in Las Vegas**

Hollywood celebrities and superstar athletes turned out for a flashy presentation to announce that the former Aladdin hotel-casino would stage its grand opening as the rebranded Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino on Sept. 28 and 29. "We will be throwing the biggest party that Las Vegas has ever seen," said actor Bruce Willis, who was joined by actress Carmen Electra and athletes Roger Clemens, Pete Sampras and Sugar Ray Leonard in introducing the revamped resort. A \$1 billion makeover of the Arabian-style resort on the Las Vegas Strip has been in the works since private partnership OpBiz bought the bankrupt property in 2004 for about \$500 million. The finished Planet Hollywood property is expected to have 2,600 movie-themed guest rooms and suites, along with two 50-story towers with 1,200 time-share residences, set to open around the end of 2009. Opbiz co-chairman Robert Earl, who founded the Planet Hollywood International Inc. restaurant chain, also introduced several nightclub and restaurant offerings from New York steak house Strip House to L.A. celebrity hangout and pan-Asian restaurant Koi. "We scoured the planet and found some great attractions," Earl said. A touring rhythmical show created by the producers of "Stomp," called "Stomp Out Loud," has opened at the property in a new \$28 million theater. The property also has added a show by magician Hans Klok, who will have Electra as an assistant for three months. TV newsmagazine "Extra" will open a lounge to conduct celebrity interviews and keep patrons up to date with entertainment news, while Panasonic provided 5,000 plasma displays for public areas and guest rooms. Boulevard Invest LLC announced last month that the shops in the attached Desert Passage shopping mall at the property would begin operating as Miracle Mile Shops in May. OpBiz is a partnership that includes Earl, private equity investor Bay Harbour and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. Earl and Bay Harbour Management have a joint venture with an 85% interest in the property while Starwood holds the remaining 15%.

Source: The Associated Press

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