



February 26, 2008

Smokey Bones Sets Table for Its Post-Darden Future

With a new team in place, Smokey Bones Barbecue & Grill says it's ready to move forward. The restaurant chain, which is owned by Boca Raton-based private-equity firm Sun Capital Partners, named six new members of its executive team and outlined a strategy that it hopes will revitalize its barbecue-and-sports-bar brand. "We're going to capitalize on the elements that our current consumers give us credit for, but also be able to use that as a platform to attract new guests," said Smokey Bones CEO Ian Baines. Orlando-based casual-dining operator Darden Restaurants sold Smokey Bones to Sun Capital in December, about six months after selling more than 50 of the barbecue chain's locations. Darden CEO Clarence Otis had said the company determined it couldn't develop Smokey Bones into a successful national chain. Barbecue chains have been a tough sell when restaurants try to expand because of regional differences in cuts of meat used for the dish, cooking methods and even sauces. "Smokey Bones has been able to do it better than anybody, but to nationalize it has been a problem," said Christopher Muller, restaurant professor at University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Baines expects new Chief Financial Officer Louis Jehl to play a key role in the company's turnaround. Jehl comes to Smokey Bones having served as CFO, executive vice president and treasurer of Carlisle Corp., a Memphis, Tenn.-based company that owns 99 Wendy's restaurants. The company also is looking at its bar strategies -- including extending hours so it can operate more effectively as a bar -- and how it advertises. The new team also includes: *Mike Hackney, who was formerly senior vice president of operations for Toronto-based SIRCorp, as executive vice president of operations; *Brinker International veteran Julie Klinger as vice president of human resources; *Peter Bell, vice president of marketing, who comes to Smokey Bones from Sun Capital's Friendly Ice Cream chain; *Drew Stafford, director of information technology services, who has been a consultant to several large companies, and *Jay Bunkowske, who has created field training plans for the Perkins restaurant chains, as manager of training.

Source: OrlandoSentinel.com

Papa John's Appoints Jude Thompson to Board of Directors

Papa John's International, Inc. announced the appointment of Joseph Jude Thompson to the company's board of directors. Mr. Thompson has held positions of increasing responsibility with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, a division of WellPoint, Inc., or its affiliates since 1989. Serving as senior vice president of WellPoint and president, Individual Business of Anthem since 2006, Mr. Thompson is responsible for all aspects of the company's Individual Business unit in the 14 states served by WellPoint, which generated \$5+ billion in revenue in 2007. "We welcome Jude to our board of directors," said Papa John's founder chairman, John Schnatter. "We think his experience in serving customers in the highly competitive health care industry will bring a new perspective to the board. "I welcome Jude to our company," said Papa John's president and chief executive officer, Nigel Travis. "We look forward to his input and advice as we continue to move the Papa John's brand forward."

Source: Papa John's International, Inc.

Owner of Old Country Buffet Files Bankruptcy

Buffets Holdings Inc., parent company of Old Country Buffet, announced that it has filed for Chapter 11. The Eagan, Minn.-based Buffets has 626 restaurants in 39 states, including 615 buffet-style restaurants under the Old Country Buffet, HomeTown Buffet, Ryan's and Fire Mountain names, and 11 Tahoe Joe's Famous Steakhouse steak-buffet restaurants. The privately held company also has 16 franchised locations in six states. Buffets has 10 restaurants in the St. Louis area, according to its Web site. All of the Buffets' restaurants will remain open and staff will be paid as usual, the company said. Group reservations and all customer programs and policies, including coupons and gift cards, will remain in effect. "We intend to use the reorganization process to make the company stronger and more financially secure as we continue to contend with the current challenging operating environment," Buffets CEO Mike Andrews said. "This restructuring is driven primarily by the need to reduce the amount of debt on our balance sheet." To fund its continuing operations, Buffets has secured a \$385 million debtor-in-possession financing facility from several financial institutions in its bank group. The credit facility includes \$85 million in new funding and \$300 million carried over from the company's pre-petition credit facility.

Source: Bizjournals

TGI Friday's Cuisine Inspired by Contest

Customers of Carrollton-based TGI Friday's will get a chance to dine on items they see on TV. More than 600 Friday's restaurants nationwide will offer menu items inspired by winning entries from the Food Network's Ultimate Recipe Showdown. The inaugural showdown item will be unveiled on air Sunday. It will make its restaurant debut the next day. Over the following six weeks, the Food Network will showcase the best efforts of 54 contestants, including five from Texas. The recipes will then move from TV to table. The winning recipes will be modified slightly by Friday's culinary team before being added to the chain's menu.

Source: The Dallas Morning news

South Florida Town Bans Chain Restaurants

Following through on a promise made in 2006, the Palm Beach town council unanimously voted to prohibit chain restaurants - a chain being at least three - on the island. The ban is an effort to "lock the barn before any more horses get out," as William Guttman, chairman of the planning and zoning board, said in December. The horse that got out is Starbucks, which operates a 25-seat shop on Worth Avenue. The coffee giant opened in March amid worries of the flip-flop-wearing crowd it would attract. The move to preserve the town's character would have prevented the upscale Italian eatery Grotto Ristorante from opening on Royal Poinciana Way last year. The restaurant is one of at least four of the same name operated by Dallas-based Landry's Restaurants. The change in the zoning code that the council approved defines "formula" restaurants as three or more of a chain with similar names and trademarks; standardized menus and food; or similar architecture, interior design or uniforms. Still, a chain operation could move into town in disguise, as Houston's did in 1999 by tweaking its menu and changing its name in town to the Palm Beach Grill.

Source: PALM BEACH POST

Steak N Shake Finds No Buyer

Restaurant operator The Steak n Shake Co. said after a strategic review it has decided not to sell itself. The company said it will focus on a turnaround plan and improving unit economics instead. In terms of a sale, "None of the offers received to date as part of this process reflect what the committee or board believes is the full underlying value of the company," Steak n Shake said in a statement. Negative trends in the casual dining sector hurt the process, the company said. Casual-dining chains have been under pressure as consumers cut spending or trade down to fast food restaurants as they face weak credit and housing markets.

and high food and gas prices. "We remain confident in the long-term future of Steak n Shake as we focus our attention on continuing our turnaround plan and hiring a permanent chief executive officer," said Alan Gilman, interim president and CEO.

Source: Associated Press

Starbucks Cutting 600 Jobs, Many in Seattle

Starbucks announced recently that it is cutting about 600 positions, some through attrition and about 220 through layoffs. No in-store employees were laid off, and the cuts are separate from Starbucks' plan to close about 100 underperforming U.S. stores this year. Many of the lost jobs, including about a third of the layoffs, are at Starbucks' Seattle headquarters. The moves are part of Howard Schultz's effort to turn around the company, whose U.S. operations and stock price have suffered the past year. Starbucks' board ousted former Chief Executive Jim Donald last month and reinstated Schultz as the company's top boss. Since then, he has decided to retrain in-store employees, offer free Wi-Fi to certain customers and stop selling warmed breakfast sandwiches. In a memo to Starbucks' 170,000-plus employees, Schultz wrote that an organizational analysis over the past several weeks was at times emotional and stressful. "I know that I am responsible for ensuring the success of the company for the long term, which means that difficult decisions must be made," he wrote. He also announced a restructuring of Starbucks' U.S. business, including expanding from two to four geographic regions to improve support for employees. Functions like finance, human resources and marketing are being reorganized or consolidated. More changes will be announced at the company's annual meeting March 19. "I like to see action taking place, but it will be a year before we decide if these changes are significant enough to be positive for the business," said James Walsh, an analyst with Coldstream Capital Management in Bellevue, which owns Starbucks shares as part of \$1.1 billion it manages.

Source: Seattle Times



Culver's® Gives Back to Local Communities during 16-State 'Day of Giving' American Red Cross® Fundraiser

In conjunction with National Red Cross Month, Culver's® more than 370 restaurants in 16 states are donating 10 percent of sales on Wednesday, March 5, to participating American Red Cross® chapters during a second annual system-wide "Day of Giving" fundraising event. Guests can enhance the total Red Cross contribution by giving personal donations in canisters available at each location throughout the week. Building on last year's success, Culver's fundraising goal for the one-day event is \$175,000. Culver's and the American Red Cross are holding the event during National Red Cross Month to celebrate and reflect upon the work of the Red Cross in communities throughout America. Culver's was recently recognized with the Circle of Humanitarian Award from the Red Cross for the substantial support that the company and its franchise partners provided in 2007. "The 'Day of Giving' has become one of Culver's and its franchise partners' major outlets for serving the community. We are exceptionally proud to partner with the Red Cross for the second year to help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies," said Lea Culver, co-founder of Culver's and a volunteer for the Red Cross. "Donations like these from Culver's 'Day of Giving' make a significant difference to local individuals during a time of crisis," said Roger Dahl,

Service Area Executive, Midwest Service Area, for the American Red Cross. "Every donation helps our efforts to get people back on their feet. We sincerely thank Culver's for building a program to serve local Red Cross communities across the country."

Source: BusinessWire

Ruth's Chris Completes Purchase of 22 Mitchell Restaurants

The sale of 19 Mitchell's Fish Market restaurants, known as Columbus Fish Market locally, and three Cameron Mitchell steakhouses to Ruth's Chris Steak House Inc. has been completed, the companies said. Ruth's Chris bought the restaurants, which were owned by Cameron Mitchell Restaurants, for \$92 million. Ruth's Chris plans to expand the Mitchell's Fish Market chain nationwide. Damon Liever, former Ruth's Chris senior vice president of marketing, will be president of the new seafood division. The 33-restaurant Cameron Mitchell chain was started in 1993 in Columbus. As a result of the sale, it now numbers 10.

Source: THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Buffalo Wild Wings Sees Big '08

Buffalo Wild Wings Inc. reported fourth-quarter earnings of 34 cents per share, beating Wall Street estimates, and projected net income could grow 25 percent in 2008. The company earned \$6 million on total revenue of \$91.4 million. Analysts polled by Thompson Financial expected earnings per share of 31 cents. Adjusted for an additional week in fourth-quarter 2006, revenue at the company increased 18.9 percent. Company-owned restaurant sales grew 9.1 percent to \$81 million or 18.1 percent adjusted for the extra week in the previous year. Same-store sales increased 3.4 percent at company-owned stores and 2.3 percent at franchised stores. St. Louis Park-based Buffalo Wild Wings said sales are up 4.1 percent at company-owned stores and 1.3 percent at franchised stores so far in the first quarter.

Source: Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal

Ruth's Chris Steak House Appoints Robert Vincent Executive Vice President and CFO

Ruth's Chris Steak House, Inc. announced the appointment of Robert Vincent as the new Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of the company effective March 17, 2008. Vincent will administer all areas of corporate finance, accounting, investor relations, internal audit and information technology. Vincent will be replacing Thomas Pennison Jr., former Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. Pennison Jr. would be leaving the company to pursue other business and personal interests in his home state, Louisiana. Pennison Jr., however, will continue to consult with the company through the transition. Since April 2000, Vincent had been serving as Executive Vice President-Finance, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer at Uno Restaurant Holdings Corporation. The Heathrow, Florida-based company's Board Chairman, President and CEO, Craig Miller, said, "On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire Company, we welcome Bob to the Ruth's Chris family. With a long tenure of both financial and restaurant experience, we believe Bob is ideally suited to lead the finances of our organization as we continue our global expansion and build long-term value for our shareholders." Miller continued, "We appreciate that Tom Pennison has generously agreed to serve as a consultant to the Company as Bob transitions to his new role. We wish Tom the best in his future endeavors in New Orleans."

Source: RTT News

Ruby Tuesday Announces a New Franchisee for the Development of Restaurants in Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon and Oman

Ruby Tuesday, Inc. announced its international franchisee, Daliya Al-Wataniya for General Trading and Contracting W.L.L., will open nine Ruby Tuesday restaurants in Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, and Oman over

four years and a tenth Ruby Tuesday in the Avenues Mall in Kuwait City. Daliya Al-Wataniya is a subsidiary of Sultan Food Products Company of Kuwait City. “We are extremely proud to welcome Sultan Food Products to our expanding global franchise community,” said Mark Ingram, President of Franchise for Ruby Tuesday. “National Arabic Company for Restaurant Management (NAC), our development and operating partner in the Middle East, has been instrumental in our growth in this area. We are excited another terrific franchisee has joined us.” NAC operates three Ruby Tuesdays in Kuwait and will open its fourth restaurant on the Nile River in Cairo. Emad Bu Khamseen, Chairman of NAC, said, “We will soon begin construction of our fifth Ruby Tuesday, to be located on the Gulf Road in Kuwait City. We are also developing our first restaurant training center in Kuwait, which will be named 'The Center for Leadership Excellence' after Ruby Tuesday’s corporate training facility in Maryville, Tennessee. This new training center will support the anticipated growth of Ruby Tuesday in the Middle East.” Ayman Sultan, Chairman of Sultan Food Products, said, “We are pleased to add Ruby Tuesday to Sultan’s menu of successful enterprises. Our varied businesses in the region, including retail, restaurants, trading, fashion, telecom, security systems, and investments, uniquely position us to undertake this exciting opportunity.”

Source: Ruby Tuesday

Bruegger’s Bagels Acquires Triangle Bagels and Bagel Factory Growing Its National

Bruegger’s Enterprises, Inc. announced that it has acquired Triangle Bagels, Inc. (“Triangle”), a franchisee of 14 Bruegger’s bakery-cafes in North Carolina, and Bagel Factory, Inc. (“Bagel Factory”), an operator of five bagel bakeries located in Philadelphia and its suburbs. Triangle is being acquired from its owner Edward Davis, a Bruegger’s franchisee, and Bagel Factory from the Becattini family. The five Bagel Factory locations, which offer a wide variety of freshly-baked bagels, signature sandwiches, salads, and soups, will complement 18 existing Bruegger’s bakery-cafes in Pennsylvania. Triangle’s 14 Bruegger’s locations are part of Bruegger’s 32-store North Carolina footprint. Terms of the acquisition were not disclosed. Founded in 1983, Bruegger’s is an affiliated portfolio company of Sun Capital Partners, Inc. James J. Greco, President and CEO, Bruegger’s Enterprises, Inc., said, “The addition of five Bagel Factory stores and the purchase of 14 franchised bakeries in North Carolina increases the scale of our national operations while providing additional operational efficiencies. Bruegger’s and its GUEST-focused team are dedicated to serving delicious, healthy food that brings guests back again and again to enjoy a wholesome meal with family and friends. With five operating commissaries that produce raw dough from scratch, we are the only national bagel chain using fresh dough and a boil and bake process, thus allowing Bruegger’s to achieve the highest level of product quality and freshness and a continuing commitment to superlative food.”

Source: Bruegger’s Enterprises, Inc./BusinessWire



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The Cheesecake Factory Announces Ten Million Share Increase in Share Repurchase Authorization

The Cheesecake Factory Incorporated announced that as part of its recently announced fiscal 2008 business plan, its Board of Directors has approved a ten million share increase in the Company’s share repurchase authorization. As a result, the Company now has approximately 17.5 million shares available for

repurchase. In addition to the free cash flow of approximately \$80 million to \$90 million that the Company expects to generate in fiscal 2008 and utilize in support of share repurchases, the Company is in discussions with its lenders to increase its revolving credit facility by approximately \$50 million to \$100 million to further support its plan to return capital to shareholders in fiscal 2008.

“We are executing on our plan to return capital to shareholders and are pleased to have the increased share repurchase authorization in place. The extension of our repurchase authorization reflects our confidence in The Cheesecake Factory and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to increase shareholder value,” said David Overton, Chairman and CEO. “We expect the additional financing to support our share repurchases to be finalized shortly, which will position us to immediately take advantage of opportunities to repurchase our shares, in accordance with our trading policy and as market conditions warrant.” The Company also announced that the Board of Directors has increased its size to eight members from six members, and unanimously elected Allen J. Bernstein and Alexander L. Cappello to fill the newly created vacancies, effective February 12, 2008. In addition to their appointments to the Board of Directors, Mr. Bernstein will serve on the Compensation Committee and Mr. Cappello will serve on the Audit Committee. “We are pleased to announce the appointments of two new independent directors to our Board—Allen J. Bernstein and Alexander L. Cappello—and extend a warm welcome to both of them. Allen adds an enormous amount of restaurant industry and general management expertise to our Board, and Alex brings an extensive background in finance and service on civic and corporate boards. We believe that the expansion of the Board and the addition of two highly qualified individuals will be a benefit in broadening the expertise represented on our Board,” concluded Overton.

Source: The Cheesecake Factory Incorporated

Mos Food and Duskin Form Capital, Business Ties

Japanese hamburger chain Mos Food Services and donut chain Duskin Co. said they would take small stakes in each other, jointly open stores and work together in marketing, product development and procurement. The operator of the Mos Burger chain and Duskin, which runs the Mister Donut chain and also operates a cleaning-equipment leasing business, also plan to join hands in tackling overseas markets, with Southeast Asia eyed as their main target. Japanese restaurants face a tough operating environment due to the country's declining population and sluggish consumer spending. Under the deal, Mos Food will buy a stake of up to 1.6 percent in Duskin, which will in turn acquire a 4.1 percent stake in Mos Food by buying its treasury stock. The stakes are worth about 1.9 billion yen (\$17.6 million) each at current market prices. Mos Food has about 1,380 Mos Burger stores in Japan and some 160 in other Asian countries, such as Taiwan and Singapore. Duskin runs some 1,300 Mister Donut stores in Japan and about 1,500 in other Asian countries, such as China and South Korea. The companies had said during afternoon trade that they would brief on a capital and business alliance.

Source: Reuters

With Increased Dough, CiCi's Goes National

CiCi's Pizza is gearing up for a coast-to-coast expansion in 2008. The 600-restaurant, Texas-based chain reported a 5.7 percent increase in sales in January 2008 over January 2007. The company plans to expand into the California, New York and New Jersey markets, with around 185 new franchise locations. They will give the chain a nationwide presence. "Our strong January and year-to-date performance reflects the loyalty of our existing guests, brand acceptance by new customers and the excellence of our restaurant managers and crew as they focus on delivering a great experience for an unbelievably low price," said Craig Moore, president of CiCi's Pizza. CiCi's was founded in 1985 in Plano, Texas. It has sites in 30 states, and has opened about 180 new stores in new and existing markets in the past three years. There are three CiCi's restaurants in New Mexico. Roswell, Las Cruces and Albuquerque are each home to one location of the value-priced pizza buffet chain.

Source: New Mexico Business Weekly

Growing Pains for Chipotle

Though the hot Mexican restaurant chain missed the fourth-quarter profit forecast, analysts say it still has a better chance of attracting cost-conscious diners than other brands. The slump in the restaurant industry seems to be catching up with the hot Mexican chain Chipotle Mexican Grill, whose shares got crushed on Feb. 15 after its fourth-quarter earnings per share fell one penny short of expectations. By normal standards, the profits that the Denver-based restaurant chain reported after the market close on Feb. 14 were robust -- growth of nearly 61% in the last three months of 2007 and of 66.4% for the full year. But robust doesn't cut it when the Street's expectations keep ramping higher based on the company's impressive track record since its vaunted initial public offering two years ago. Chipotle posted a fourth-quarter profit of 53 cents per share, including a one-cent non-recurring tax charge, vs. 33 cents a year ago. Revenue jumped 31.5% from a year ago to \$288.9 million, thanks to new restaurants that weren't in the comparable number a year ago and a 10.6% rise in sales at locations open at least one year. Improved labor efficiency and hikes in menu prices related to adding naturally raised meats in selected markets helped boost profits, while general and administrative costs dropped from 7.6% to 7.1% of revenue in the latest period, mainly as a result of efficiencies of scale from higher restaurant sales. "This is finally the first quarter where the company didn't materially exceed expectations, followed by higher sales and earnings expectations" for the coming year, says Robert Derringer, an analyst at Morgan Keegan in Nashville, Tenn. "This is the first quarter where we have to trend our numbers rather than increase our expectations." He concedes that he and other analysts got too far ahead of themselves in their projections not only for the fourth quarter but for 2008 and 2009 as well, he said. On the conference call it held to discuss the results, Chipotle said it was comfortable with earnings growing at around 25% annually over the next few years.

Chipotle's margins narrowed in the fourth quarter partly because of higher labor costs. For 2008, the company said it doesn't expect to see a slowdown in rising commodity costs, most of which will be associated with higher cheese prices. While Chipotle isn't contracted for meats, since it aims to use naturally grown meats instead of commodities, it says it would have to raise prices by just 1.5% in order to offset higher food costs this year, according to Haskell, who has a hold rating on the stock. "They compete somewhere between fast food and casual dining," says Derringer at Morgan Keegan. "The value in that [market] is one that clearly appears to benefit in tough economic times" as consumers scale down their dining choices to more affordable venues. Even though he believes the restaurant industry has been in a recession for the past six to nine months, Derringer thinks Chipotle will continue to do better than most of its peers. He predicts the stock will continue to trade at a lofty price due to its operating strength.

Source: BusinessWeek's Investing channel .

Applebee's, New Parent Leave High-Level Positions on Plate

The resignation of Applebee's International Inc.'s top marketing executive this month adds to a long list of openings at the company and its new parent. Marketing Senior Vice President George Williams will leave on March 30. MarketSphere Consulting LLC will lead Applebee's marketing department until Williams' successor is named. The Lenexa-based casual-dining chain, which sold to IHOP Corp. in November, now lacks a president and permanent marketing head. Organizational charts from IHOP show two openings in the corporate office: heads of human resources and new business development -- and five high-level openings for the IHOP chain, including the unit president job. Candidate searches continue, company spokeswomen said. IHOP has said its new structure is designed to support two highly franchised brands, as it plans to franchise most of the more than 500 company-owned Applebee's restaurants. "It's not easy to consolidate two big companies in a short amount of time," said Mitchell Albert, a partner with Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLC. "I don't think any company of the size of an Applebee's and an IHOP is going to let open positions sit a long time. But at the same time, they're certainly not going to fill those positions for the sake of filling (them)."

Source: Kansas City Business Journal



Wendy's Taps Into Management Bench Strength; Announces Two Key Marketing Department Appointments

Wendy's International, Inc. announced that Paul Kershnik has been named as interim Chief Marketing Officer. Kershnik, who joined Wendy's in March 2007 as Senior Vice President of Marketing Strategy and Innovation, now reports directly to Chief Executive Officer and President Kerri Anderson. He also will continue to serve on the corporation's strategic planning council. Wendy's also announced today that Bob Holtcamp has been promoted from Vice President to Senior Vice President of Brand Management. "Paul, Bob and the marketing team are executing our important advertising transition to the "Waaaay Better" campaign and they are implementing key elements of Phase 2 of our strategic plan to re-ignite sales growth," Anderson said. "These appointments are another example of Wendy's management depth and strength. Both are seasoned professionals with diverse experience with some of the world's best-known consumer brands." As previously announced, Wendy's has hired Spencer Stuart to conduct a national search for Wendy's permanent Chief Marketing Officer. Kershnik remains a candidate to replace Ian Rowden, who left the Company at the end of 2007 for personal reasons. Kershnik now has responsibility for R&D, strategic insights, operations innovation, brand marketing, field marketing, media, diversity marketing and creative/advertising production. Holtcamp reports to him.

Source: Wendy's International, Inc./PRNewswire-FirstCall

Foodservice Yearbook International 2008 Global Buyer's Guide

For decades, FYI has been regarded worldwide as a "One-Stop Shop" for purchasing and specifying, the Foodservice Yearbook International reaches buyers at the very beginning of the decision-making process. FYI is the original and most widely used annual buyers' guide in global foodservice. It reaches close to 100,000 buyers, consultants, exporters and foodservice professionals around the world, and with more than six readers per copy. Also, the latest buying patterns survey showed that our readers refer to FYI eleven times per year, and these contacts have produced actual sales for the advertisers. The Foodservice Yearbook International contains the most comprehensive listing of exporting suppliers and manufacturers to the foodservice world with more than 1,300 manufacturers' listings and over 3,000 product listings. Bonus circulation at selected major global trade shows during 2008. The Foodservice Yearbook International's targeted audience of 16,166 readers control over 80% of the world's \$1.5 trillion annual foodservice volume. The readers of FYI are buying-empowered professionals at global and regional headquarters of hotel and restaurant chains, major hotel and restaurant locations, consultants, contract caterers, cruise-ships/airline/rail/amusement caterers, supermarket and c-store chain headquarters and a global network of distributors, in over 140 countries worldwide. The targeted circulation of Foodservice Yearbook International allows you to consolidate your advertising budget into one magazine that reaches the entire foodservice world. For more information, please contact mschacher@globalfoodservice.com

Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART) Announces Local Community Service Projects Planned During 75th Semi-Annual Hospitality Training Conference in Minneapolis

The Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART) announced details of the community projects planned to give back to the local community for participants attending their upcoming Hospitality Training

Conference, scheduled for March 1-4, 2008 at The Depot Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota. CHART has been incorporating service projects into their semi-annual conferences for the past 5 years. The conference is the 75th semi-annual gathering of hospitality training and human resource professionals, who meet together to network, share best practices, learn from inspiring keynote speakers and participate in interactive educational sessions. Curt Archambault, CHART Board President and Regional Training and Development Manager for Jack In The Box, commented "CHART cares about the communities hosting our conferences and wants to not only use the resources offered by the city but to give back to it and positively impact people in the local area." He adds, "It is also a wonderful team building exercise for our members, one we hope they will incorporate at their companies as well." CHART will be involved in 3 local service projects: Service Project #1 — Gift Cards for Ronald McDonald House Charities, Upper Midwest; Service Project #2 — Teddy Bears for Firefighters, and Service Project #3 — Assist at Hope for the City. Jennifer Johnston, Senior Trainer at Red Lobster, is one of the members coordinating the service projects. She notes, "The weather may be chilly in Minneapolis, but CHART attendees will bring warmth to the community." She adds, "We hope to give a big "hug" to children and families of Minneapolis who need it most with our gift cards, teddy bears and support."

Source: Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART)

Polish Rivals Shrug Off Starbucks Arrival

As Starbucks plots its move into Poland's booming coffee sector, local shops and chains insist there's nothing to fear. The giant is moving in next door to Polish coffee shops. Starbucks, the iconic American company with more than 15,000 locations worldwide, is expanding into Central Europe. The company poses new competition to other coffee shops and chains in an already blossoming Polish market. Poland has been a Central European hot spot for coffee stores and products in recent years. From 2001 to 2006, the market for hot drinks in Poland grew between 3 and 4 percent annually, according to market data. The Warsaw Business Journal reported in 2005 that about 80 coffee shops open in the country each year. Krakow residents can choose from a range of coffee shops to suit their lifestyles. The number of stores and bars belonging to chains is estimated to be in the low hundreds. Popular chains include imports like Nescafe and Costa Coffee and domestic companies like Mercer's Coffee and Coffeeheaven. British-owned but Warsaw-based, Coffeeheaven is the country's largest café chain with 48 stores. There are countless other homegrown Polish coffee shops with loyal followings. Much of the market growth has been driven by increasing wages, which boosts out-of-home coffee consumption. Overall economic growth has also put the country in closer touch with Western investors and café trends. "Poland has a dynamic economy and a high number of regular coffee drinkers.... It is an attractive market for all international coffee companies," Judd Williams, regional director for Costa Coffee Europe, told Transitions Online. "We expect the sector to grow steadily over the coming few years, in the same way it has done in the West." Starbucks will contribute to this growth. The corporation selected AmRest, a Warsaw-based restaurant management company that already runs Pizza Hut and KFC in the region, to oversee its Central European market, which initially will include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Although AmRest has not officially announced any Polish Starbucks locations, openings may begin as early as the second quarter of 2008. As many as 100 stores may open in the next few years. Starbucks has been criticized for its expansion tactics, which have included saturating local markets with stores to sap the competition, according to several media reports. In recent months, however, the company has admitted that opening too many stores too quickly may be harming its brand. Executives hope a new development strategy unveiled in January will reel in the bloated business and rekindle financial growth. No matter where Starbucks stands economically, coffee businesses in Poland are determined not to be done in. Coffeeheaven plans to double its stores in the next few years. Costa Coffee hopes to open 100 cafés by 2011. Small, local coffee shops, however, agree that keeping business limited and customers close will preserve their niche in the market. It's the chains that stand to lose, they say, because they offer clones of the Starbucks atmosphere. "Regular customers come in every day. They open the door and know what to do – order their coffee or large beer," said Kate Fuchs, 23, who works at Krakow's Café Golebia 3. The smoky, wood-paneled café is usually full of local people chatting or working on their laptops. Although it offers to-go coffee, Fuchs said the café isn't the sort of place customers "rush in and rush out" of, as she sees them do at larger chain stores. "We're not afraid of Starbucks," she added.

Source: BusinessWeek

Dunkin' Donuts Adds Sandwiches and Pizzas

Dunkin' Donuts has launched a new line of products that will allow the chain to capture sales in a bigger slice of the day. Among the changes are flatbread sandwiches, personal pizzas and hash browns, which give more options for lunch and dinner. New cooking ovens will give items the oven-toasted taste. Besides the new selections, breakfast baked goods can be warmed for customers. Demand for menu items throughout the day prompted the change, the company said in a release. The new menu items are now available in 3,500 shops throughout the country. Within the past year, the company has launched plans or entered into agreements for significant expansion in Las Vegas, Indianapolis, Phoenix, Dallas, Austin and Houston, among other locations. Dunkin' Donuts is also increasing its presence in international markets, including the company's recent announcement to expand into mainland China. Founded in 1950 and headquartered in Canton, Mass., Dunkin' Donuts selling 2.7 million cups of coffee per day, nearly 1 billion cups a year. Dunkin' Donuts is a subsidiary of Dunkin' Brands Inc. Known for its coffee and baked goods, Dunkin' Donuts introduced espresso-based beverages in 2003.

Source: Tampa Bay Business Journal

Daytime-Only Restaurant Chain Eyes New Territory in Maryland

Breakfast and lunch dining chain First Watch Restaurants Inc. is looking to expand into 35 states, including Maryland, in 2008. "The breakfast part of the day continues to experience tremendous growth and, more than ever, consumers are seeking freshly prepared food, unique and bold flavors and healthier offerings," said Kenneth Pendery, chief executive of First Watch, in a release. First Watch operates two restaurants in Maryland in Pikesville and Rockville. The Bradenton, Fla., company reported sales of \$72 million in 2007 from 78 existing restaurants and has always had same-store sales increases. The latest restaurant openings were in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pikesville, West Pennsylvania and Florida. First Watch has franchises in 11 states, and company executives said its upcoming expansion will take place through its franchising model.

Source: Baltimore Business Journal

Sizzler Says it's Prime for a Sale

- Steakhouse chain looking for buyer; • 'The Sizzler team has completed a fantastic journey.'

The Australian owners of the Sizzler steakhouse chain have decided to sell the company, Sizzler announced. Sydney-based Pacific Equity Partners, which acquired Sizzler from Worldwide Restaurant Concepts and took it private in 2005, has hired Los Angeles-based Houlihan Lokey to find a buyer for the chain's U.S. and international businesses. It expects to complete the sale within six months. Sizzler's day-to-day operations are unaffected by the decision to market the company, it says. In the Central Valley, there are Sizzler restaurants in Hanford, Merced, Modesto, Turlock, Fresno, Bakersfield, Stockton, Visalia and Sacramento. In all, Sizzler owns or franchises more than 300 restaurants in 17 U.S. states and Puerto Rico, Australia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and China. It plans to open its first restaurant in Mexico later this year. "The Sizzler team has completed a fantastic journey since the buyout of Worldwide Restaurant Concepts," says Pacific Equity Partners Managing Director Rob Koczkar. "With such a strong foundation now in place, Sizzler can be better guided by a partner with more experience and presence in the U.S. market." Unrelated to the sale, says the company, Ken Cole, Sizzler USA president and CEO since 2001, has announced his resignation effective Feb. 22. Mr. Cole, who has maintained a residence in his home state of West Virginia, will become CEO of casual dining chain Quaker Steak & Lube, based in neighboring Pennsylvania. Kevin Perkins, CEO of Collins Foods Group, which also is owned by Pacific Equity Partners, and former Sizzler USA president, will assume Mr. Cole's responsibilities.

Source: Central Valley Business Times

If you would like to have news about your company, please send all editorial contributions to Mario Schacher: mschacher@ariteam.com



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