



July 24, 2009

Starbucks Brews Red Hot Trading Activity

Shares of Starbucks Corp. soared more than 18 percent in last week's trading, right after the Seattle coffee giant announced better-than-expected third-quarter results. Shares in Starbucks rose \$2.70, or 18.38 percent, to close at \$17.39 in trading. Starbucks blew by expectations of analysts, who were impressed with the company's improved sales and cost-cutting maneuvers. "Earnings are on the rebound, primarily on the strength of cost savings and a sequential improvement in sales results," said Dan Geiman of McAdams Wright Ragen brokerage in Seattle, in a note to investors. "The results also suggest that the competitive pressures some had feared, specifically McDonald's introduction of espresso beverages and the swirl of advertising surrounding it, have had little if any negative impact on Starbucks' results," Geiman wrote.

Source: Triangle Business Journal

Pizza Inn Announces Deals for 13 New Franchised U.S. Restaurants. Re-Energized Chain Used Incentive Program to Entice Franchisees in Tight Economy

Pizza Inn is defying recession-conservatism, having recently signed 13 new deals through its development incentive program. In addition, Pizza Inn, Inc. has one new corporate-owned location under construction in the city of Fort Worth, TX and has signed letters of intent for 2 additional locations in the Dallas - Fort Worth Metroplex, continuing their commitment to growing the company. Offered to both new and existing franchisees, the incentive program was designed to maximize potential for domestic growth and offer flexible alternatives for franchisees who may be discouraged by the current credit crisis. The benefits included 0% royalty for the first full year of operation and 2% royalty for the second full year, easing start-up costs during the first two years of a new restaurant's operation. Existing Pizza Inn franchisees have signed on to develop additional locations, further demonstrating their dedication and re-investment in the brand. Two current franchisees have signed agreements to open five locations in the greater Spartanburg area, while other existing franchisees will be opening locations in southern North Carolina, Knoxville, TN, Ardmore, OK, and Pontotoc, MS. Pizza Inn has also attracted veterans in the franchise industry who bring experience from such heavyweights as Subway, Hardees and Sonic, among others. Three new franchise groups have signed on to develop locations in Abilene and Ft. Worth, TX and Jesup, GA. "The current economic environment presents an excellent growth opportunity for us, as families continue to seek more economical dining options," said Charlie Morrison, CEO of Pizza Inn. "We look forward to expanding our brand throughout these areas and serving up taste, quality and value with our family-oriented atmosphere. These new agreements are a result of our incentive program and the addition of Madison Jobe as Vice President of Development to the Pizza Inn team. Given his strong industry reputation and his ability to attract quality individual and multi-unit development partners to our system, these are the results we expected." With more than 300 locations, Pizza Inn has benefited from America's increasing commitment to family-friendly dining, affordable pricing and freshly-made food items. By offering consumers a variety of traditional and specialty pizzas, with its dough made fresh daily, as well as pastas, sandwiches and desserts, Pizza Inn has delighted consumers taste buds for more than 50 years.

Source: Pizza Inn, Inc.

Yum! Brands Taps Aguilera for Hunger Relief

Christina Aguilera is raising her voice to help fight world hunger. Yum! Brands announced today that the singer will be the global spokesperson for the company's World Hunger Relief effort. Aguilera will appear in public service announcements and in-store advertising, and will be the face of the campaign's Web site, FromHungerToHope.com.

Yum! Brands, which owns the KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell restaurant chains, tapped Aguilera in the hope that her popularity will raise interest in the campaign and encourage individuals to donate or volunteer their time. "Christina's global iconic status will raise tremendous attention to this critical issue, and more importantly, will save millions of lives," said David Novak, Chairman and CEO, Yum! Brands, Inc., in a statement. "We are extremely excited about Christina's passion to join the fight against hunger." World Hunger Relief, launched in 2007, spurs company employees, franchisees and their families to volunteer and raise funds for hunger relief initiatives. According to Yum! Brands, the program has raised \$36 million for organizations such as the United Nations' World Food Programme, and is helping to provide approximately 160 million meals to people throughout the world. "It's unacceptable a child dies every six seconds somewhere around the world from hunger," said Aguilera in a statement. "By lending my voice for World Hunger Relief, I hope to raise awareness about the issue and move people from hunger to hope."

Source: Brandweek.com

Buffalo Wild Wings Hits 600-Restaurant Mark

After getting its start in Columbus more than 25 years ago, Buffalo Wild Wings Inc. is celebrating the opening of its 600th restaurant. The Minneapolis-based chain said it hit the milestone with the opening of a company-owned eatery in Wilson, N.C. The latest restaurant puts the company one step closer to a goal of 1,000 company-owned and franchised restaurants nationwide. Buffalo Wild Wings has more than 80 restaurants in the state, about 20 of which are in Central Ohio. Jim Disbrow and Scott Lowery began the chain 27 years ago near The Ohio State University's campus at 2044 N. High Street. The original restaurant closed down in 2006 to prepare for the opening in 2007 of an expanded outlet a few blocks north at the intersection of High Street and Lane Avenue. The headquarters moved to Minneapolis in 1995 when the company hired current CEO Sally Smith as its chief financial officer. The company went public in 2003 and last year reported \$24.4 million in profit on \$422.4 million in revenue.

Source: Business First of Columbus

Pizza Entrepreneurs Hooked On Domino's

It's no secret that the recession in Britain has boosted demand for cheap thrills, whether it's a night out at the movies or staying in with a pizza, and delivery chain Domino's Pizza UK on Monday once again wowed market watchers with a set of strong six-month results. The recession has also led to more out-of-work businessmen trying on an apron for size and opening their own Domino's franchise store, eager to get a slice of the company's success while the financial sector struggles to find growth. "People being made redundant from management positions are investing in the franchise," said Paul Hickman, an analyst with KBC Peel Hunt, who upgraded his annual profit forecasts for Domino's UK by 3%, to 27 million pounds (\$44.6 million), on Monday. Franchisees need 260,000 pounds (\$430,000) up front to open their own store, and it seems that the white-collar victims of job cuts across the country have not had much trouble getting access to this kind of capital. "The caliber of these new applicants is higher than ever," said Chris Moore, chief executive of Domino's UK & Ireland, itself a franchisee of the American Domino's Pizza. "They are better capitalized." Moore said that franchisees had invested 12.1 million pounds (\$20.0 million) in the first six months of the year by opening new stores, buying out other franchisees and refurbishing their outlets. According to a spokeswoman for Domino's, the number of franchise applicants has risen 13% over the past six months, to 2,145. A typical number for the year is around 4,000. The franchise-only model has

benefited Domino's, which is not weighed down by a portfolio of restaurants. Franchisees are expected to be "fanatical about pizza," according to Domino's, which has taken to labeling these true champions "Dominoids." That fanaticism doesn't come cheap, however: Franchisees pay 5.5% of their annual sales to Domino's, and add an extra 5.0% to a global advertising and promotion fund.

Source: Forbes.com

Baskin-Robbins Moves into D.C.

Baskin-Robbins announced that Washington, D.C. is now open for franchise sales. More than 35 new stores are projected throughout the District of Columbia and the surrounding area. To fuel this growth in and around Washington, the ice cream chain is seeking store developers. "As the Baskin-Robbins brand continues to develop in Washington, D.C., we're excited to provide new store owners with the unique opportunity to capitalize on their territory's potential, serve as the face of the brand in the community, as well as set the direction of the market's growth," says Salman Siddiqui, vice president of global business development for Baskin-Robbins.

Source: QSR

Caribou Coffee Opens Five New Stores in Kuwait

Caribou Coffee has announced the opening of five new coffee shops in Kuwait as part of its expansion plans, revealed Kuwait Times. Al-Sayer Franchising is the Gulf franchisee for the coffee company. According to the news paper, the new coffee shops are located in the Mahboula area, Yarmouk Co-op premises, in the new 360 mall, in the Ministry Complex and in the Public Authority for Civil Information. Caribou Coffee also announced a local delivery service for customers who are within five minutes distance from each of the Mahboula and Yarmouk branches. The company reportedly has 28 coffee shops in Kuwait, 27 in the UAE, seven in Bahrain, two each in each in Jordan and Qatar and one each in Saudi Arabia and Oman and plans to expand further.

Source: FoodBusinessNews.net

8 Wonders of Kansas Cuisine Announced

Hamburgers, fried chicken and artisan breads are among the menu choices at eight restaurants determined to be the "most iconic" in Kansas. The Kansas Sampler Foundation announced the list as the "8 Wonders of Kansas Cuisine." The restaurants are Bobo's Drive In in Topeka, Brookville Hotel in Abilene, Cozy Inn in Salina, Crawford County Fried Chicken, Free State Brewing Company and WheatFields Bakery Cafe in Lawrence, Guy & Mae's Tavern in Williamsburg, and Hays House 1857 Restaurant & Tavern in Council Grove. Foundation director Marci Penner said her organization works to preserve and sustain rural culture. She said the cuisine picks weren't just about having restaurants compete, but to showcase what Kansas has to offer so people will want to travel to the state.

Source: The Associated Press/Post-gazette.com

Smashburger to Open More Stores in Wichita, Tulsa and Oklahoma City

Smashburger, a burger restaurant chain, is going to open its first Tulsa location this July. Located at 7392 Olympia Avenue in the Tulsa Hills Shopping Center, a second store is also scheduled to open this fall. Smashburgers reportedly contain 100% Angus beef and are served on butter-toasted buns topped with cheeses, haystack onions, guacamole or fried egg. The new restaurant would provide OK Smashburger or OK Smashchicken made with fried pickles, pepper jack cheese, haystack onions on an egg bun. It would

also provide fried pickles on the Smashside menu and local bottled beer. Scott Crane, president of Smashburger, said: “We are excited to expand our footprint into Tulsa and bring a better burger to Oklahomans. We are sure that Tulsa burger fans will soon agree that Smashburger is the best \$5 burger they’ve ever had.” Smashburger said that its entry into Tulsa is the result of a joint venture partnership with area real estate developers and a multi-unit franchise operator collectively called Smashburger WTO Acquisition. The joint venture group plans to open more stores in Wichita, Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

Source: Food Business Review

Kevin Higgins Named President of Burger King EMEA

Burger King Corp. announced the appointment of Kevin Higgins as President of its Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA) region, based in the company’s EMEA headquarters in Zug, Switzerland. As part of the BKC global executive team, Higgins will report to Chairman and Chief Executive Officer John Chidsey. Higgins will begin his new role in August, replacing Peter Robinson, who will complete his three-year commitment to the company in October. “Kevin’s industry and multinational experience are significant assets to our business and we are pleased to have him on board,” Chidsey said. “We’ve made considerable strides in the past few years in Europe and the Middle East and we thank Peter Robinson for his contributions to our business. We are confident that through Kevin’s leadership, we will continue to build on our accomplishments in the region.” “Burger King’s signature products are known and loved all around the world and I am excited to join such a dynamic and iconic brand,” Higgins said. “I am confident that my experience in the restaurant industry will enable us to build upon the brand’s recent growth and success in the EMEA region.” Higgins’ career spans more than 20 years in the consumer foods industry in Europe and the United States. Most recently, he served as General Manager of Yum! Brands Europe and Russia Franchise Business Unit in Geneva, Switzerland where he led a multifunctional and multinational management team. Under Higgins’ leadership, this business unit opened over 100 new units per year and launched Taco Bell and the Pizza Hut Delivery (PHD) brand in Europe.

Source: The BURGER KING®

Chef Emeril Lagasse Joins Macy’s Culinary Council

This summer, Macy’s will welcome Emeril Lagasse, one of America’s most beloved celebrity chefs, to its esteemed Macy’s Culinary Council, a culinary initiative that aims to impact the way customers shop, cook and eat at home. Lagasse will join fellow Council members such as Todd English, Tyler Florence, Cat Cora, Rick Bayless, Ming Tsai and Govind Armstrong, as a face of Macy’s housewares and food divisions. “Lagasse is one of the most recognized chefs in the United States known for his culinary expertise and innovation. His regional New Orleans cooking style adds a distinctly different dimension to the current roster of celebrated chefs on the council,” says Jeff Kantor, President, GMM Home at Macy’s. “With his help, Macy’s will continue to be an influential voice on today’s home and tastemakers, guiding shoppers in choosing the very best tools of the trade for their kitchens.” Macy’s has long been a leader in culinary innovation and the company looks to this new partnership with Lagasse as its latest venture in bringing the highest quality cookware and food industry expertise to its consumers. Macy’s commitment to providing the best of the best for the kitchen combined with the culinary guidance of the Council ensures that customers will not only select the right tools for their homes but also know how to use them. With Lagasse on board, Macy’s will continue to bring celebrity chef-caliber shopping experiences to its stores.

Source: Macy’s Culinary Council

Hilton Names Steven Peterson VP of Corporate Chef – Americas

Hilton Hotels Corporation (Hilton) announced that Steven Peterson has joined the company as Corporate Chef – Americas, a newly created position. Steven will have overall responsibility for the Hilton Americas

culinary program including menu development, creating operating efficiencies and quality control. Additionally, he will work closely with food and beverage operations to achieve an upscale and luxury dining experience geared towards exceeding guest expectations within all of the full-service Hilton brands. Prior to joining Hilton, Steven held the position of Executive Chef for The MGM Grand Resort & Casino in Las Vegas for seven years and had oversight of the culinary operations for the resort-casino. From 1999 to 2002, Steven served as the Corporate Chef for Starwood Hotels & Resorts where he was responsible for developing the culinary agenda and direction within the hotel company as it related to new hotel openings as well as acquisitions, staffing, and corporate sponsored events. "Steven's superb culinary talent and proven track record at highly regarded resorts, hotels and restaurants is consistent with Hilton's renewed commitment to deliver world-class dining options," said Doug Zeif, Vice President Food and Beverage – Americas. "Under his direction, our culinary team will achieve the company's mission to enhance the culinary offerings throughout Hilton's Americas system." Steven has received numerous industry accolades including the Beaver Creek Food and Wine Festival "Best of Show Award" and the Texas Wine and Food Festival "People's Choice Award," and was named one of the top four chefs by the National Chefs of America – Greater Chicago Area. He also orchestrated the first culinary apprenticeship program in Las Vegas.

Source: Hilton Hotels Corporation

Ruby Tuesday, Inc. Announces Pricing of Common Stock Offering

Ruby Tuesday, Inc. announced the pricing of the previously announced offering of 10,000,000 shares of its common stock at a price to the public of \$6.75 per share. The Company has granted the underwriters a 30 day option to purchase up to 1,500,000 additional shares to cover over-allotments, if any. The Company will use the net proceeds to pay down debt. The Company expects to close the offering on July 28, 2009. Wells Fargo Securities and BofA Merrill Lynch are joint book-running managers and SunTrust Robinson Humphrey and Morgan Keegan & Company, Inc. are co-managers of the offering. The shares of common stock are being offered under an effective registration statement on Form S-3 filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including a related prospectus as supplemented by a prospectus supplement. The offering is being made solely by means of the prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement. This press release shall not constitute an offer to sell, nor a solicitation of an offer to buy, nor shall there be any sale of these securities in any state or jurisdiction in which such an offer, solicitation or sale would be unlawful prior to registration or qualification under the securities laws of any such state or jurisdiction.

Source: Ruby Tuesday, Inc.

Charlie Brown's Restaurant Group Announces Executive Promotions and New Internal Audit Department

CB Holding Corp., the parent company of Charlie Brown's Steakhouse, Bugaboo Creek Steak House and The Office Beer Bar & Grill, announced today the promotions of Bill Benz to Manager of Restaurant Systems for all CB Holding Corp. brands and Ron Soltis to Senior Director of Internal Audit. In addition, Tom Harvey will be transitioning from the information technology department to Director of Internal Audit. "These organizational changes and the addition of an internal audit function serve a critical need for the company to be able to move forward in its task to improve systems technology and internal controls," said Ed Schwartz, Chief Financial Officer of CB Holding Corp.

Benz will direct the IT department growth and strategic initiatives. His background in both restaurant operations and information technology make him an obvious choice in leading the department in technology projects. Soltis' previous experience in the financial area suits him well for the role of Senior Director of Internal Audit. His overall knowledge of the company, its point-of-sale systems and back office systems will add great value to this newly created department. Soltis and Harvey will develop the system reporting necessary to conduct timely and effective audits of all CB Holding Corp. restaurants and use this information to help educate and train the management teams. "Adding a new department to the organizational structure and promoting Bill and Ron will enhance our employee and guest experience and

contribute to the success of our long-term business plan,” said Samuel Borgese, President and Chief Executive Officer of CB Holding Corp.

Source: CB Holding Corp./Charlie Brown’s Steakhouse



GE Capital’s Franchise Finance Business Provides \$12 Million to Tribox LLC to Acquire Additional Jack in the Box Units. Funds facilitate a 14-unit acquisition in Dallas and Fort Worth

GE Capital, Franchise Finance completed a \$12 million loan to Tribox LLC for the purchase of 14 Jack in the Box units and to refinance some existing debt. Tribox currently owns and operates seven Jack in the Box franchise units in the Dallas area. “We’re happy to help Tribox grow and expand their reach in Dallas,” says Dave Stansbery, vice president, GE Capital, Franchise Finance. “We are committed to helping restaurants grow by offering access to capital and providing flexible financing options.” This is the first financing between GE Capital, Franchise Finance and Tribox. More than 20 years ago, Javed Aslam, a partner at Tribox, began his family’s business with only one Jack in the Box unit, and has since grown the family business to seven regional units. Javed and his son, Chris, formed Tribox with a third partner to continue to expand their presence with Jack in the Box in Dallas. “Our relationship with GE Capital will help us extend our reach within the Jack in the Box franchise and connect with additional customers in Dallas,” says Chris Aslam, partner, Tribox LLC. “We’re excited to work with GE Capital, Franchise Finance because of their longstanding dedication to the restaurant business and commitment to helping franchisors and franchisees grow and prosper.”

Source:GE Capital, Franchise Finance/Jack in the Box Inc.

Real Mex Restaurants Appoints Two New Board Members

Real Mex Restaurants, Inc. announced the appointment of Jeff Campbell and Craig S. Miller to its Board of Directors. Anthony Polazzi and Raj Patel, who represented certain shareholders, will leave the Board in order to accommodate the new appointments. Jeff Campbell is currently the Brinker Executive in Residence at San Diego State’s School of Hospitality and Tourism. He is also Chairman of “The Chairmen’s Roundtable,” a San Diego based organization composed of former CEO’s and entrepreneurs. Campbell is the former CEO of Burger King and ex-Chairman of the Pillsbury Restaurant Group. He also served as Senior Vice President for Brand Development for Pepsi-Cola as well as CEO of the Johnny Rockets and Catalina Restaurant Groups. Craig S. Miller formed Miller-Sinton Capital Partners LLC in 2008 with his partner William C. Sinton. MSCP seeks investments and provides advisory services to the Restaurant Industry. Miller is the former President, CEO and Chairman of Ruth’s Chris Steak House, Inc. He has also served as President and CEO of Furr’s Restaurant Group and Uno Restaurant Corporation. Dick Rivera, President, CEO and Chairman of Real Mex Restaurants commented that “Both of these new directors have significant and relevant experience which we expect to draw upon as we continue to execute our strategic plans. I have known both of them for many years and I am excited to have them join the Real Mex Board. I also appreciate the support that Anthony and Raj have provided and thank them for their willingness to vacate their positions to allow the new Board members to join our team. In the past ninety

days we have refinanced our debt, introduced new menus in our three core concepts and launched a broader, more balanced advertising campaign. We are focused on enhancing the value proposition we offer our guests, improving our operations and capitalizing on the opportunities that exist to grow our market share.”

Source: Real Mex Restaurants, Inc.

Top Chinese Restaurant Chains Eye Taiwan Market

As political tensions ease and trade ties boom, China is taking on a new challenge -- to win over Taiwan with its culinary clout. A number of China's leading restaurant brands, notably Peking Quanjude, Tianjin Goubuli and Chongqing Cygnet, are aiming to expand their business to the island as early as this year, the companies and reports said. Others might follow, with a delegation from more than 20 restaurant chains scheduled to visit Taiwan in August on a fact-finding trip, according to the Beijing-based China Cuisine Association. The expansion became possible when Taiwan recently lifted a decade-old ban on investment by Chinese firms or individuals -- the latest step forward in rapidly improving ties. Under the new investment measures in effect since June 30, Chinese investors will be permitted to buy into 100 categories in the island's infrastructure, manufacturing and service sectors, including restaurants. Taiwan and China have been governed separately since 1949, when the nationalist Kuomintang fled to the island after losing a civil war to the Chinese communists. Over the years, various Chinese cuisines took root in Taiwan along with some 1.5 million mainlanders who relocated here. Famous dishes such as Peking duck and Sichuan hot pot became regular favourites on the island. Officially, China still claims sovereignty over Taiwan but business and civil exchanges have boomed since Beijing-friendly President Ma Ying-jeou took office last year. The main challenge for Chinese investors is to find the right local partner and serve genuine cuisine despite the lack of original ingredients -- the reason hot pot chains Tanyutou and Little Sheep stumbled in Taiwan after managing to invest indirectly through Hong Kong, observers say. "Tanyutou's partner wasn't an industry pro while Little Sheep just can't pull it off when its key ingredient, the Inner Mongolian sheep, was unavailable," said food critic Wang Jue-yao. Quanjude, China's oldest Peking duck restaurant, is facing similar obstacles because of Taiwan's ban on Chinese poultry imports over bird flu concerns. "We want to make authentic Peking roast duck but Peking duck has fatty skin and tender meat while Taiwanese duck is leaner. There is still some gap" in taste, said Quanjude chef Bi Quansheng at a recent promotion in Taipei. The stakes are even higher now for the Chinese players looking to conquer Taiwan's competitive culinary world, critic Wang said. "Since none had been successful, for companies like Quanjude which sees itself as China's number one restaurant brand it must succeed at the first try. It is a face issue," she said. "The Taiwan market is very symbolic. It would be a sort of an ideological victory to be the first Chinese company to succeed here." Some local restaurateurs, however, are skeptical about their Chinese peers expanding to the island amid the recession. "It is already very difficult to turn profits in Taiwan's restaurant business and recent economic downturns make it even harder," said Chuang Li-yu, who has run a Peking duck restaurant in Taipei for 30 years. "I think those big-name Chinese restaurants can generate some buzz at first but after the novelty wears off they have to manage to build a loyal clientele," she said. Jennifer Shang, chief of China Cuisine Association's international division, is optimistic, saying Tanyutou's closure in Taiwan was "an individual case" which should not discourage others. "Members of our delegation are interested in the Taiwan market. They are looking forward to seeing it first hand and exchanging ideas with Taiwanese restaurateurs," she told AFP. Quanjude got a boost during a recent two-week food festival in the island's two largest cities Taipei and Kaohsiung, with patrons fully booking its duck banquet priced at around 7,260 Taiwan dollars (220 US) for a table of five. "We are confident and it has long been our wish to make roast duck for Taiwanese people," said Quanjude vice general manager Liu Xiaohung in Taipei. "We believe it will meet most people's taste."

Source: Agence France-Presse

J. Christopher's Under New Ownership

Atlanta-based J. Christopher's Restaurants LLC reported it took over the remaining equity of the J. Christopher's brand. Financial terms were not disclosed. Sam Haddock and Dick Holbrook now own the brand, concept, all intellectual property and franchising rights of the concept, as well as the two company-owned restaurants. Haddock is currently a partner and manager of the Red Hawk Restaurant Group LLC, which owns and operates Moe's Southwest Grill restaurant in Alabama. Holbrook is the former president and chief operating officer of AFC Enterprises Inc., which was the parent company of Church's Chicken, Popeyes Chicken & Biscuits, Cinnabon and Seattle Coffee Company during his tenure. Jeff McCann and Chris Brogdon, the founders of J. Christopher's and former partners with Haddock and Holbrook, will continue to own and operate their 18 J. Christopher's Restaurants under a license agreement with J. Christopher's Restaurants LLC. Brogdon also operates franchised restaurants in Nashville, Tenn. and Macon, Ga. "Our relationship with Jay and Chris has truly been a great partnership," said Dick Holbrook, CEO of J. Christopher's Restaurants, in a statement. "Their vision to create a neighborhood daytime breakfast and lunch spot serving familiar food with flair combined with the knowledge that Sam and I have about the restaurant industry has catapulted the success of J. Christopher's. We look forward to taking the brand to even greater heights and will without a doubt continue to consult with Jay and Chris on a regular basis."

Source: Atlanta Business Chronicle



Orlando World Center Marriott Resort & Convention Center Makes another Huge Meeting Connection...the 50,000 Square-Foot Palms Ballroom Will Connect to the 105,000 Square-Foot Cypress Ballroom Following Cutting-Edge Renovation

The premier 2,000-room, Orlando World Center Marriott Resort & Convention Center makes another huge meeting connection. The Palms Ballroom, which is currently undergoing a cutting-edge renovation, will soon connect with the impressive, 105,000 square-foot Cypress Ballroom (home to the largest pillar-free resort ballroom in the nation) and offer planners 150,000 square-feet of contiguous exhibit space. The stunning ballroom will boast state-of-the-art technology, décor and functionality. Easy access to multiple hang points, a sophisticated sound and lighting system together with four 1,800 square-foot breakout rooms dynamically round out the experience. "Our latest meeting connection takes us to a whole new level in terms of our physical ability to accommodate the meeting needs of our groups and successfully deliver memorable meetings," stated Tim Pyne, director of sales and marketing. "This is an exceptional time to let our team energize and customize your meeting or event while taking advantage of our great incentives at the same time."

Source: The Orlando World Center Marriott Resort & Convention Center

Burgerville Setting Up Mobile Food Truck

Burgerville will introduce a mobile food truck near Tom McCall Waterfront Park, inspired by the food carts that have blossomed on downtown Portland, OR lots. The 24-foot-long truck will sell a limited menu of burgers, fries, soft drinks and vanilla, chocolate and maybe seasonal shakes. The truck will allow the Vancouver-based company to test a community's interest in the restaurateur's products before committing the money to building a permanent location, said Jeff Harvey, president and chief executive officer of The Holland Inc., Burgerville's parent company. Burgerville is exploring possible sites for a permanent downtown Portland location as well as in the Seattle area, he said. The truck also will allow Burgerville to have a presence at community events and could serve as a pinch hitter when one of the existing 39 restaurants is renovated, he said. "We wanted to find creative ways to reach more guests," said Harvey, who added that the privately held chain's sales are lower than this time last year. Burgerville spent more than \$100,000 preparing the truck, considerably less than the \$1 million or more the company says it typically spends to open a restaurant. The truck will be open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day this month, starting Thursday, in a vehicle pullout off the northbound lanes of Southwest Naito Parkway between Southwest Yamhill and Taylor streets. The company obtained a permit for the parking spot as well as having the health departments in Multnomah, Clark, Washington and Clackamas counties approve the mobile kitchen, Harvey said. On the social networking front, the company has about 2,000 Twitter followers, twitter.com/BurgervilleUSA, who will be getting updates on where the Burgerville mobile kitchen is and where it will be going.

Source: The Oregonian.com

Starbucks Tests New Names for Stores

When is a Starbucks not a Starbucks? When it's a 15th Avenue Coffee and Tea. The ubiquitous coffee-shop giant is dropping the household name from its 15th Avenue East store on Capitol Hill, a shop that was slated to close at one point last year but is being remodeled in Starbucks' new rustic, eco-friendly style. It will open next week, the first of at least three remodeled Seattle-area stores that will bear the names of their neighborhoods rather than the 16,000-store chain to which they belong. Names and locations for the other two shops have not been finalized. If the pilot goes well in Seattle, it could move to other markets. The new names are meant to give the stores "a community personality," said Tim Pfeiffer, senior vice president of global design. Starbucks' logo will be absent, with bags of the company's coffee and other products rebranded with the 15th Avenue Coffee and Tea name. In the spirit of a traditional coffeehouse, it will serve wine and beer, host live music and poetry readings and sell espresso from a manual machine rather than the automated type found in most Starbucks stores. The changes come at a time when retailers, including Starbucks, are suffering from slower foot traffic and lower profits. Those who can capture a sense of community and offer consumers a compelling experience will win in the long run, said Michelle Barry, senior vice president of the market-research firm Hartman Group in Bellevue. "It's not about nostalgia per se, but more about telling a story and reappropriating some things from the past and re-imagining them in a new environment," she said. Some local coffee-shop owners say Starbucks is appropriating their environments. Sebastian Simsch, co-owner of Seattle Coffee Works near Pike Place Market, became frustrated last year after large groups of Starbucks employees kept crowding into his 300-square-foot store to look around. "I thought it was funny," he said. "We're this little store, and I thought Starbucks didn't need to learn from me." During the third group's visit, Simsch let them know what he thought. "I said, 'If you want to buy something that's great, but just to look, that's not cool,' " he recounted. "I called the PR department and said, 'Never again.' " They did not come back, even after he moved into a much larger store next door. Victrola Coffee Roasters saw the Starbucks people a lot more often. "They spent the last 12 months in our store up on 15th [Avenue] with these obnoxious folders that said, 'Observation,' " said Victrola owner Dan Ollis. He thinks it's interesting that they spent all that time in his shop, which serves wine and beer, then applied for a liquor license to sell wine and beer at 15th Avenue Coffee and Tea. He's also intrigued by the name change, but said it will mean little if the new store looks like Starbucks' newly remodeled stores near Pike Place Market and in University Village. Like those stores, the 15th Avenue location was designed using local talent and materials, including table tops from a landscaper's stone yard and discarded theater seats from a local antiques dealer. "This one is definitely a little neighborhood coffee

shop," Pfeiffer said. Ollis has his doubts. "Starbucks is Starbucks, and we're different from them," he said. Then his competitive streak kicked in. "I wonder if they will want to participate in a Victrola Barista Smackdown?" Pfeiffer didn't flinch at the idea. "We should set that up," he said.

Source: The Seattle Times Company

Plamondon New Chairman of Restaurant Association of Maryland. Group Working to Bolster Eatery Sales During Recession

Even with the recession spurring consumers to count their pennies, James N. Plamondon wants to help them realize that it is still OK to go out for dinner. That will be part of his mission as Plamondon, 45, takes over as chairman of the Restaurant Association of Maryland. Plamondon is co-president of the Plamondon Cos. in Frederick, owner and franchiser of Roy Rogers Restaurants. "The efforts are to continue to grow its membership and become more relevant to its membership," Plamondon said of the trade group. "I'm happy to be a part of a team that is going to do that." The group's focus has changed over the last year or so to help the industry increase profitability and expand its base, Plamondon said. "Given the economic times that we're facing, people are eating out less," he said. "There is no question about it." Although consumers have tightened their purse strings, Paul Hartgen, president of the group, said they will eventually patronize restaurants more often. "People like going out to eat and going out with friends," he said. In an e-mail, M. Richard Adams, president and CEO of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, said Plamondon Cos. has been a member for almost 30 years and support chamber programs as a trustee sponsor. "Jim and Pete are committed to the local business community and often help us by hosting and supplying food for our events," Adams said. Plamondon's brother Peter Jr. is company co-president. At the association, Plamondon wants to demonstrate the group's relevance and importance to existing members and grow its membership. Among its activities, the association offers a variety of insurance and endorsement programs that can save members money. "In this economic climate, any little bit helps," Plamondon said. "The restaurant industry is an industry that has very low, thin margins." Plamondon Cos. owns 18 Roy Rogers Restaurants in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia and oversees 33 franchise locations in states including Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. The Roy Rogers brand was started by Marriott in the 1960s but was later bought by Hardee's, with the idea of converting the restaurants to Hardee's restaurants, Plamondon said. However, Hardee's effort failed and Roy Rogers restaurants were sold off to various entities. The Roy Rogers eateries in the Baltimore and Washington areas were sold off to McDonald's, Plamondon said. Plamondon Cos. also owns and operates all three Marriott-brand hotels in Frederick, plus a SpringHill Suites by Marriott hotel in Hagerstown. Construction is under way on a Courtyard by Marriott hotel in Hagerstown and is slated to open next spring, Plamondon said. The recession is exacting its toll, although the privately held company is doing "OK," Plamondon said. He declined to disclose revenues. "We're not where we want to be," he said, with sales "flat" from last year. However, costs have stabilized after a challenging 2008, when high gasoline prices cut into the bottom line, he said. "We're buying smarter and we're able to negotiate contracts a little better," he said. The company has not had to lay off any of its 700-plus employees in its hotels and company-owned restaurants, he said. Plamondon's main goal is to continue to grow his company's sales and transactions, a feat he acknowledged is difficult given the current economic climate. Plamondon would also like to open one to two additional company restaurants a year and mentioned that a new Roy Rogers restaurant recently opened in Germantown.

Source: Gazzette.net



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

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