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Gelsosomo's Pizzeria moves to hot spot

By KEN KOSKY
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Business is one of many finding success near Target and Kohl's

VALPARAISO -- The owner of Gelsosomo's Pizzeria in Valparaiso said moving the popular pizza parlor from a cramped spot inside Inman's Recreation Center to a spacious new location near Target and Kohl's is already paying off.

Ron Nabhan said the restaurant, which opened earlier this month, did three to four times the carry-out business during its first week.

"With Kohl's, Target and Menards, everything is going that way ... It's a very good location," Nabhan said.

"We've done very, very well so far."

Nabhan said a hot location alone isn't enough to sustain a business. But when that's combined with a known brand -- Gelsosomo's has won several people's choice awards in Porter County -- success follows.

Gelsosomo's also has locations in Chesterton, Portage and Schererville.

The new Valparaiso location at 2605 LaPorte Ave. features dining for 175 to 200, plus a banquet room that seats 70 people. The banquet room walls and ceiling are painted with a mural that makes a person "feel like you're in Italy," Nabhan said.

He expects the banquet room to be well used because there is no charge to rent it. The only cost is the food people order, and the restaurant offers buffet packages. Nabhan, who also owns the Gelsosomo's location in Chesterton, said that banquet room is used five to six days a week.

Location is key

Nabhan said Gelsosomo's was outgrowing its old location in Valparaiso, so he and his wife, Michele, drove around the city looking for a new spot. He knew right away he wanted the spot available across from Target and Kohl's.

He isn't the only business owner to recognize it's the place to be.

Scotty Thompson, owner of Scott's Maytag, which is just down the street from the shopping center, said his business increased significantly when he moved there in January from a location near WiseWay on U.S. 30.

"If you increase your business by 10 percent, that's an exception to the rule. That's great. I far exceeded that," Thompson said.

"Just by moving to that location, it's increased my business in every aspect -- service, parts, new appliance sales, even used appliance sales."

Thompson said thousands of Valparaiso residents pass his store on their way to Menards, Wal-Mart, Target and Kohl's. When he was out on U.S. 30, he believes only residents on the south side of the city saw his store.

The location has made Scott's Maytag the fastest growing of the 26 Maytag dealers in Chicagoland. Thompson agreed with the Gelsosomo's owner that the good location works best when combined with a respected brand name and good service.

The Target/Kohl's area has been great for Thompson for more than one reason, Thompson said. In addition to seeing his business increase, Thompson finds just about everything he needs near his store. The addition of Gelsosomo's is the icing on the cake for him.

"I love Gelsosomo's. I'm probably going to gain 30 pounds," he joked.

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