Father, son open 10th Checkers on Walton Way in Augusta

By Gracie Shepherd

Andy and Drew Pye, a father and son business team, are opening their 10th Checkers franchise today at 1720 Walton Way.

Andy Pye has worked in franchises since 1998 and owns Checkers restaurants in Augusta, Charleston, S.C., and Virginia Beach, Va. Fast food is a family business for the Pyes, and Drew Pye started out working in one of his father's Checkers restaurants when he was 15. After he graduated from Georgia Southern University, Drew found himself drawn to franchising and started to work his way up through the company.

"It's kind of in our blood," he said. "I really fell in love with the business."

Drew managed restaurants and now acts as director of operations for the company, Augusta Burgers Inc. Andy Pye said he didn't set out to make his franchising operation a family affair, but that it's been a mutually beneficial way to work.

"Drew was very good at this business, and it just kind of evolved into this," he said. "You know you can trust your family, and that they're going to be loyal and look out for the best interests of you and the business."

The fast-food sector managed to weather the recession well, Drew Pye said, as people began to put a higher premium on saving money. The Pyes' restaurants have done very well over the past few years, earning corporate recognition for the highest earning opening week for any store in the Checkers family and getting Andy Pye named to the Checkers Franchise Advisory Council.

"Both Andy and Drew are wonderful operators and are absolutely obsessed with making sure their customers have a great experience," said Jennifer Durham, vice president of franchise development for Checkers.

Not only do the Pyes keep their restaurants functioning at high levels of efficiency, Durham said, but they also exude an excitement for what they do and what they are building for their family.

"They're building something that will grow far beyond them," Durham said. "It's the American Dream hard at work."