

Checkers & Rally's plans further expansion in Delaware



WILMINGTON — The Tampa, Florida-based restaurant chain Checkers & Rally's has recently opened a location in Wilmington, is about to open its second next month and has future plans to open more throughout the rest of the state.

The owner and franchisee of the two locations, Amrish Patel, says he thinks the state can support up to 10 total locations.

“We’ll have to see how things go, but it’s my plan right now to try to open two new locations per year,” he said. “We’ll be opening this new location in early February. Then we’ll start targeting Smyrna, Middletown or Dover hopefully later this year.”

Mr. Patel opened his first location last October and said the soon-to-be-opened location is on 4303 Kirkwood Highway in Wilmington. He says the feedback he’s already received from customers in the Wilmington area has been positive.

“Checkers & Rally’s is a good fit for Delaware because the prices are so competitive and the food is great,” he said. “People have eaten a lot at McDonald’s, Burger King and Wendy’s — I think they want to try something new.”

The chain of drive-thru restaurants has served burgers, hot dogs, chicken, fish, hot wings, French fries, shakes and soft drinks for over 30 years. The franchise claims to have more than 850 locations throughout the country. Checkers & Rally’s Director of Franchise Development, Robert Bhagwandat, notes that the highest concentration of locations is on the East Coast, and the company is targeting the mid-Atlantic region for expansion.

“Our distribution is from Florida to California, but we’re focusing in on the mid-Atlantic region right now with Delaware, Virginia and Maryland in our sights,” he said. “We think we already have some name recognition in the area, and that Delaware is full of hardworking, blue-collar people who like good tasting value meals.”

Describing the chain as “value” restaurants, Mr. Bhagwandat, said a small family could feed itself for \$20 at one of its locations where their competition could only feed two people with the same amount of money.

Mr. Patel believes in the coming years, if the expansion effort goes well, he’ll also open locations in Sussex County and near the beach towns.

“I think along Rt. 1 near the beaches would be good locations to help serve beach traffic during the summers,” he said.

Mr. Patel noted that each of his Checkers & Rally’s locations is host to about 35 employees each — one general manager and three store managers. Salaries for the management positions pay are close to \$50,000, he says.