

A Sun subscription scam?

READER ADVOCATE

Tom Thrasher was convinced a voicemail he received was a scam call and wanted to alert me since it appeared to involve the *Sun* Newspapers. “This is your local newspaper,” the automated message began. “As of today, we’ve been unable to process your recent payment for your subscription. To make sure your deliveries do not stop, please contact our customer service department.”

David
MORRIS
COLUMNIST

Rather than call the apparent scammer at a supplied 800 number, the 80-year-old Port Charlotte resident called the *Sun* — the only local newspaper he gets — which confirmed there were no issues with his subscription.

So what was the scam? I verified the 800 number is the legitimate national subscription customer service line for USA Today. Turns out Thrasher subscribes to the electronic edition of USA Today. Now realizing this might not be a scam, he called back to discover the paper was attempting to update his credit card information.

Although relieved, “It still seems strange the voicemail did not specifically identify themselves,” said Thrasher.

Gannett Company publishes USA Today. And according to its website, it also owns some 100 daily newspapers, including the News-Press in Fort Myers and the Naples Daily News. They’re united under the USA Today Network banner. However, with so many papers, a customer service representative told me the generic “your local newspaper” verbiage is used in its phone messaging.

The locally-owned *Sun’s* circulation department confirms while it also calls if there’s a billing problem, it always identifies itself and the subscriber’s name.

Yet, Thrasher was justified in being skeptical of the unidentifiable call.

“Unfortunately, with subscriptions comes renewals, and with renewals comes a gateway for scammers to target their next victim,” cautions Hiya, a company which provides call blocking and caller ID lookup services. “Scammers will cold-call subscribers and claim that their subscription is close to expiring. Then, they will push to renew their subscription and pay immediately over the phone. All they want is your personal or financial information so they can steal your identity and/or money.”

Subscription scams also come by mail. In 2016, the Federal Trade Commission charged dozens of companies sending “Notice of Renewal/New Order” mailers offering “one of the lowest available rates” authorized by publishers of newspapers including The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. In reality, the unauthorized solicitations were for rates up to 40 percent more. In some cases, consumers paid twice for the same subscription.

Then there are consumers who unknowingly purchase multi-year magazine subscriptions from telemarketers.

“Oftentimes, the presentations are so slick that consumers aren’t even aware that they have bought several magazine subscriptions until they receive the bill,” explains the Better Business Bureau.

“Salespeople may describe the cost as ‘pennies a month’ but may not explain the length of the subscription commitment or the total cost,” warns the National Consumers League. “Legitimate companies will send you the details upfront and never insist that you act immediately.”

And remember, it’s illegal to require purchasing any subscription to enter a sweepstakes.

So, be skeptical if someone tries to sell you a bargain subscription or pressures you into a decision because the offer is good for a limited time only. Ask for a written copy of the sales terms — including cost and number of installments — and compare the total to the publication’s regular annual subscription rates. When in doubt, contact the publication using a phone number or address you know is real.

Finally, when subscribing directly with a publisher, consider signing up for auto-renewal and payment. That way you can confidently hang up on a subscription telemarketer or tear up a fake renewal notice.

David Morris is the *Sun’s* consumer advocate. Contact him c/o the *Sun*, 23170 Harborview Road, Charlotte Harbor, FL 33980; email dmorris@sun-herald.com; or leave a message at 941-206-1114.

New Sherwin-Williams store colors customers satisfied

By **SUE WADE**
SUN CORRESPONDENT

With North Port consistently ranked among the nation’s fastest-growing cities, it’s no surprise that the whole area lights up on the radar of Fortune 500 building-materials corporations like Sherwin-Williams.

Feb. 12, was opening day at a new, 4,000-square-foot North Port Sherwin-Williams outlet on Tamiami Trail next to Alvaro’s Restaurant.

Its spacious showroom, designed especially for a

booming local population of homeowners, has a palette of over 2,000 paint colors for them to choose from.

“We can match just about any color out there,” said store manager Mike Robins.

In fact, Robins once managed to capture a color that wasn’t even out there, except in one customer’s imagination. After successfully matching her request for the color of mist rising from a freshly unwrapped grape Popsicle, he reported, “We made her happy.”

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SUN PHOTO BY SUE WADE

The team at North Port’s new Sherwin-Williams store — with a satisfied customer. Sales representative Bret Bobenmoyer, assistant manager Christina Tommasone, manager Mike Robins, and happy client Earl Nielson of Nielson Painting, who’s been a Sherwin-Williams customer for over 40 years.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Everything but the Kitchen Sink



SUN PHOTO BY KAYLA GLEASON

Owner Anthony Dedominick stands with two employees, Jessica Boniface and Ricky Walczyk, in front of one of The Paper Company’s delivery vans.

Business Spotlight on The Paper Company

By **KAYLA GLEASON**
SUN CORRESPONDENT

Sitting off 776 in El Jobean between a marina and the Myakka River, The Paper Company has a tremendously Florida feel. Since recently acquiring the business, owner Anthony Dedominick has expanded The Paper Company’s merchandise. Now, it is a one-stop, mom and pop shop for all of Charlotte County’s

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restaurant needs — though you don’t need a culinary degree or room-sized pizza oven to shop there.

• • •

Question: When did you

open The Paper Company?

Answer: We took over this business in August — the restaurant supply and equipment business — but I opened up my janitorial

and paper goods business six years ago, this month. The former owners had wanted to retire and I’d been pestering them for a while because I really wanted to come in.

Q: Can people outside the restaurant business buy from you?

A: Absolutely, we get a lot of homeowners in looking for things. People come in

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Englewood Checkers now has local owner

By **SUE WADE**
SUN CORRESPONDENT

Earlier this month, a Checkers & Rally’s promo backhandedly congratulated Taco Bell on its introduction of Nacho Fries by snarking, “Welcome to the fry game” and “We all have to start somewhere. We just happened to start 30 years ago.”

It says something when a fast-food corporation is so proud of its fries that it takes on a competitor over them.

It says even more when its Facebook fans applaud the mockery with 12,000 likes, over 25,000 shares, more than 3,500 comments and counting.

Peter Donlevy, the new franchisee for Englewood’s Checkers, chuckles over the food fight. He remembers working for Checkers corporate during the 1990s burger wars with

competitor Rally’s — before the fast-food rivals merged in 1996.

After he flew Blackhawk helicopters in the U.S. Army, Donlevy’s first civilian job in 1992 was for Checkers’ largest franchisee in Atlanta. His mission: turn around troubled locations by leading teams of bright young people, army style, to do things they never believed they could do. They became proud of their work, and top-performing Checkers stores resulted.

Now, Peter and his wife, Judy, feel they’ve come home to Checkers.

After 20-year careers elsewhere — his, traveling the world as a business consultant; hers, behind a desk as a corporate accountant — they wanted to be closer to their new Charlotte County community and to be working with people again.



SUN PHOTO BY SUE WADE

Judy and Peter Donlevy feel they’ve come full circle back to Checkers — this time, to one of the few locations with a 32-seat dining room. “I love it!” said Judy. “It’s a homey little store with great crew members.”

CHECKERS | 3

Eatery brings a taste of Buffalo to Englewood

There is a relatively new restaurant here in East Englewood called Good Time Charlie's, and it bills itself as a neighborhood bar and grill. If the truth was known however it is actually a little island here in town that is part of Buffalo, New York-south.

If you are from the Buffalo, you might remember Payne's Kettle and Keg that specialized in the flavor, cooking and deli specials that were made famous there. Owner Jim Payne has brought that special cooking and Buffalo-style flavor to his restaurant right here in town.

One look at the menu



Lang Capasso

tells you that right away, there is the Buffaloian Barbecue, which is a distinctive New York-style barbecue famous in the Buffalo-Syracuse area. There is also Chiavetta's-style chicken barbecue, which is made famous by a special sauce that is shipped all over the world, and Sahlen Hot Dogs which have a

special crunch because of their natural casing. By the way, Sahlens are the official hotdog of the Buffalo Sabres, Buffalo Bills and the Florida Panthers, among others.

I know what you are thinking: "What about me, I'm not from that area, but I'm looking for something very special to eat, and I'm a little tired of the same-old, same-old that I get every day." Well my, the selection and price of this cozy little restaurant is right up your alley, regardless of where you're from.

Let's start with some of the specials they run on a regular basis. There is the Friday fish fry, which

features beer-battered haddock fillets served with these delicious sides of coleslaw, macaroni salad, potato salad, French fries, with rye bread and butter. On Tuesdays there are 50-cent wings.

On Wednesdays, there are burgers and beer served with fries, slaw and a cold pint of beer for only \$10. Thursday is pasta night, featuring any of their pasta dishes for only \$10. Oh yeah, there are \$2 margaritas all day, every day.

There are a few of the everyday specials also. There are the huge ultimate sandwiches with the chicken finger bomber and the super sonic meat ball with crusty French bread

and a mountain of fries with gravy on the side.

If you are into burgers, there is the half-pound Charlie's regular and cheeseburger with coleslaw and fries. Of course, there are the traditional and turkey reubens.

Jim's favorite is the beef on weck, which is a huge thinly sliced beef sandwich drenched in horse radish and served on a Kimmelweck roll. The wings were pretty tempting also with the 10-, 20- and monster-sized 40-wing bucket.

If you have an Italian flair, there is a fine selection there too as well as a good selection from the sea featuring "shrimp in a basket"

with eight extra large butterfly shrimp choice of potato and coleslaw.

When you look at the portions, prices and variety I think you will agree Charlie's has it all. By the way did I mention a full menu of salads, soups, pasta, steaks and of course appetizers that include French onion soup with melted Provolone cheese. Speaking of soups if you like clam chowder you will be most happy when you see your order delivered loaded with clams.

If you are hungry or going to be soon go to 3754 N. Access Road, or call them at 941-460-3010. That is a good take-out number too.

CHECKERS

FROM PAGE 1

Because Englewood's Checkers was corporate owned, the southernmost Florida store among 890 Tampa-based Checkers & Rally's outlets lacked the hands-on involvement of a hometown franchisee. And Peter wanted to once again inspire a team to do its best and be proud of its work.

When he bought the Englewood franchise, it was a win-win all around.

Now he and Judy are determined to revitalize a location that deserves a better reputation.

The couple spends most days onsite serving customers and encouraging staff.

Judy took behind-the-counter training so she could appreciate crew member challenges firsthand. "It's really hard work!" she said.

To put the shine back on Englewood's Checkers, for customers and the community, Peter is focusing on the top line, food sales, and on the

heart of the operation: team motivation.

Every Checkers meal, from flavorful burgers to seasoned fries, is made to order, fresh.

"So," said Peter, "I tell the team that, if the sandwich doesn't look exactly like the one in that picture, every time, it's not right. Speed isn't as important as quality and consistency. Once you have that, sales will follow."

When Peter first met his new staff, he asked them what was getting in the way of doing their jobs better. "At first they were a

little timid," he said. "But within the first couple of weeks, we were working on fixing a long list."

As a Checkers & Rally's franchisee, Peter has the freedom to determine staff incentives. He ensured they would start at higher-than-minimum-restaurant wage, then earn promotions and raises as recognition for their efforts. The store's current employee roster of 13 will grow as the Donlevys do more hiring.

In recent years, the iconic chrome-and-checkerboard chain has

won several of the industry's most prestigious recognitions, including #140 on Entrepreneur's 2018 Franchise 500, Top Food and Beverage Franchise by Franchise Business Review, 2016 and 2017 Best Franchise Deals, "Best Drive-Thru in America" by QSR Magazine, "#1 Most Craveable Fries" by Restaurant Business and the "Hot! Again" award from Nation's Restaurant News.

Judy and Peter are committed to their franchise's living up to all

the industry accolades.

And to show Englewood how much has changed at its Checkers, Feb. 24, between 2 and 8 p.m., they're selling any burger on the menu, including the towering Big Buford, for only \$1 (up to two orders per car).

They'll be slammed, but they're more than up to it.

Checkers, 941-475-6678, 1725 S. McCall Road, in Merchants Crossing, Englewood, is open Sunday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 1 a.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.

PAPER

FROM PAGE 1

looking for slicers, pepper mills, odds and ends.

Q: How many employees do you have?

A: We have eight. We're like a family. My son works for me, his friends, my girlfriend. We've got one nice little family here.

Q: What is your most popular item?

A: It's the janitorial items — tissues, towels,

things like that — that's what we built the company on. I worked for a while for a big company down in Miami and it just wasn't for me, so we parted ways and I just bought a truck.

Q: What is the best part of business?

A: We're local, we've got a good community around us. We don't charge a minimum, so if you're out in Arcadia and just need a box of straws, we'll get that out to you. We try to keep everything

competitively priced.

Q: How has business changed since opening?

A: We started out across the street from Sam's Club but came here after we got the restaurant business. I think it works well, everything seems to be moving out here slowly, the area's growing.

Q: What is the hardest part of business?

A: Keeping people employed and happy, getting supplies. Cost of living is going up, I see it in a lot of our plastic products

and gas for the trucks. Keeping up with expenses, balancing everything out is definitely a challenge. It's hard to keep everything moderately priced, competitively priced, while making sure you're making enough to not go out of business.

Q: What sets you apart from similar companies?

A: Our service and personal attention. Bigger companies aren't as personal, they'll just be on the phone. My staff, my salespeople, we go see

our customers.

Q: What does the future hold for business?

A: We're going to expand the sales force and our trucks. Right now, we're trying to find a new truck so we can make deliveries further north. We're still trying to get a new sign up after Irma.

Q: Do you have any advice for new business owners?

A: Work hard, be honest, treat people nicely. It's not a big secret. It's not easy, I work a lot of hours, that's

just the way it is. It's hard but working for yourself is the best thing to do, I couldn't do anything else. Put your heart into it, believe in what you do, you'll be successful.



COLORS

FROM PAGE 1

That's one reason why "Ask Sherwin-Williams" has become the company's customer-service motto.

"The biggest satisfaction for me," said Robins, "is getting to know customers and keeping them happy—whether they're homeowners or painting contractors."



SUN PHOTO BY SUE WADE

North Port's new, 4,000-square-foot Sherwin-Williams store is at 14554 Tamiami Trail, next to Alvaro's Restaurant.

beginning I felt that I had struck my life work, and would not allow myself to entertain a thought of any other occupation. Then I kept in mind the motto, 'What is worth doing, is worth doing well.'

Those could have been Mike Robins' words.

In 1989, Robins came to Florida to visit, ended up moving here, and began looking for a career he could hold for life. He will have been with Sherwin-Williams in Port Charlotte, Venice and, now, North Port for 29 years in July.

"It's a great company to work for," he said. "And because I live in Port Charlotte, I'm looking

forward to playing an active part here in the North Port community."

The store, whose regional paint is manufactured in Orlando specifically for Florida heat and humidity, carries not only exterior and interior paint but also concrete paint for driveways, garage floors and pool decks; Purdy brushes and rollers; deck and interior wood stains; roof tile paint; spray paint and primers.

The new Sherwin-Williams (941-240-6241), 14554 Tamiami Trail, next to Alvaro's Restaurant, is open Monday to Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



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