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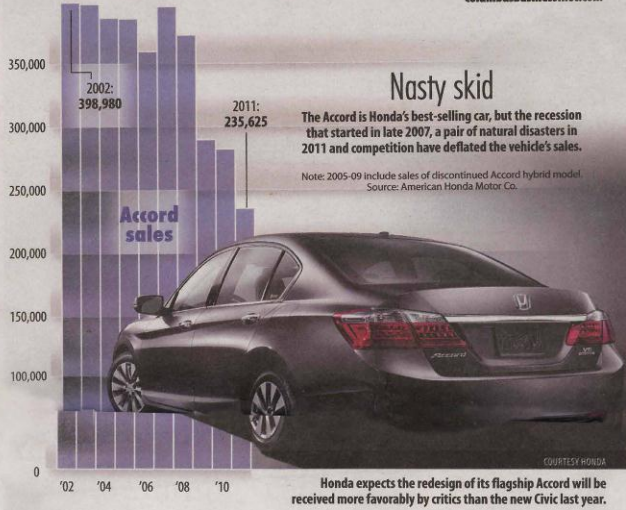


Relief valve
Rickenbacker connector to provide alternate route for growing truck traffic.
Page 23

In-kind assistance
Women business owners find mutual aid in networking groups.
Supplement



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Accord aims to avoid Civic repeat

HONDA HAS A lot riding on the next generation of its Marysville-made flagship car as it tries to keep its recent sales rebound going.

BY DAN EATON | BUSINESS FIRST

Domination of the market for midsize cars used to be ceded to the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry, but those days are disappearing. Production of the ninth-

generation Accord started this week, with the Marysville-made cars expected to be in showrooms by September. But this version of Honda's flagship vehicle arrives at a time that is more competitive
SEE ACCORD, PAGE 37

New Albany offering deal to get e-Cycle

BY BRIAN R. BALL | BUSINESS FIRST

Fast-growing cell phone recycler e-Cycle Inc. is considering moving its headquarters from Hilliard to New Albany, with its processing and distribution center possibly following the home office across town.

New Albany City Council has to lure the company's 29 administrative employees to the city, with the promise of 48 more office jobs within the next three years. The two-tiered incentive approved Aug. 21 also aims to attract 38 more jobs tied to the processing of old corporate cell phones from e-Cycle's administrative and processing operation on Leap Road in Hilliard. That side of the business could add 154 jobs in the next three years.

"What's really driving this is we've had a tremendous amount of growth in revenue, clients and employees," said e-Cycle co-founder Tonia Guy Irion. "We're at the point where, to keep up that growth, we need to separate



JANEY ADAMS | BUSINESS FIRST
E-Cycle co-founder Tonia Guy Irion says the company's rapid growth is driving the need for more office space.

our operations and distribution facility from the sales, marketing, administrative and finance end of the business."
SEE E-CYCLE, PAGE 38



A Broad St. Rally's has the new look.

COURTESY RALLY'S

Rally's testing retro design to take on future competition

BY DAN EATON | BUSINESS FIRST

Rally's is mobilizing its Columbus restaurants in hopes of keeping its recent revival rolling. Tampa, Fla.-based Checkers Drive-In

Restaurants Inc., which operates the Rally's and Checkers chains, is experiencing a sales resurgence, its same-restaurant sales up 7 percent this year atop a 7 percent increase in 2011. Central Ohio will play a key role in building on that momentum.

The 800-restaurant chain for the first time is testing a new look at nine restaurants in the U.S., including three of its 15 Columbus-area restaurants. First up is an overhaul of the eatery at 3260 E. Broad St.,
SEE RALLY'S, PAGE 38

- Shop Talk | Delaware County Bank rebrands amid turnaround. | 4
- Moving out | Howard Hanna breaking into more Central Ohio markets. | 5
- Berko | Corporate convertibles offer upside of stock, safety of bonds. | 13
- Shaping Columbus | Samuel Prescott Bush built steel empire here. | 18
- In deep | Abbott Foods heir bet on scuba shop after cashing out. | 19





CHECKERS DRIVE-IN RESTAURANTS INC.

Business: Fast-food chain operating Rally's and Checkers restaurants
Based: Tampa, Fla.
CEO: Rick Silva
Owner: Wellspring Capital Management LLC
2011 revenue: \$669.2 million
Restaurants: 800
Area restaurants: 15
Website: rallyshamburgers.com, checkers.com

Burgers are king at Rally's but the chain's menu has diversified.



PHOTOS COURTESY RALLY'S

RALLY'S: Looking to triple Central Ohio presence

FROM PAGE 1

which reopens this weekend. The 700 Georgesville Road and 2556 N. High St. Rally's restaurants will be remodeled this year.

But a new look isn't the only initiative in the works. The company thinks it can triple its network in Central Ohio to as many as 50 restaurants.

"Over the last few years, we've been outperforming against the competition," said Adam Noyes, chief operations and supply chain officer. "Everyone is looking for where you can get a great value. That works for us."

Most of Rally's menu is under \$5 and the chain routinely offers two-for deals at the \$3, \$4 or \$5 prices.

The Rally's and Checkers chains, owned by Wellspring Capital Management LLC, posted combined sales of \$669.2 million in 2011, according to trade publication *Nation's Restaurant News*. The chains are almost identical but Checkers offers additional menu selections. The chains' combined 800 restaurants – about 500 are franchised – make them the eighth-biggest fast-food burger company, with fewer eateries than Carl's Jr., which once owned Rally's, and more than Whataburger.

According to *Nation's Restaurant News*, Rally's restaurants averaged \$797,000 apiece in sales last year.

NEIGHBORHOOD JOINT

Rally's built a prototype in Mobile, Ala., last November that showed off the new look. Its interior also was redesigned to improve



COURTESY RALLY'S

Rally's are known for dual drive-throughs that minimize their real estate footprint.

efficiency. The company took elements of that exterior appearance to Ohio, with Toledo, Cincinnati and Cleveland sporting at least one redesigned Rally's.

"We've been in the market for 20-plus years," Noyes said. "It was time to evolve our image."

Noyes wouldn't disclose sales projections for its remodeled restaurants but said early results and feedback from diners indicate they are exceeding expectations. Remodeling costs average \$80,000 each, which is modest compared with the expenses some competitors face to change the images of their restaurants. But Rally's costs are less expensive because its restaurants are small with little or no inside seating. Sales are through its signature dual drive-through lanes.

The new look harks to diners – red, white and black checkerboard design, stainless steel accents and some neon.

"When people think of our brand, they think of us as a retro neighborhood restaurant chain," Noyes said.

The building hasn't been the only makeover. The menu has changed, too. Though burgers remain at the menu core, Rally's has launched chicken wings and its Cold Creations line of desserts.

RALLYING OHIO

Columbus became a corporate market for Rally's after the company bought out a franchise group in 2009.

Noyes said sales are up 30 percent in the area since control changed hands. Cleveland and Cincinnati are seeing similar improvements and are growth targets as well. The chain has 62 restaurants in Ohio.

"It's a traditionally great market with very loyal guests and a strong following," Noyes said.

Vice President of Franchise Development Jennifer Durham said Rally's wants to grow through company-owned and franchised sites, and Rally's is interested in finding franchisees in Central Ohio.

"There are 40 to 50 potential restaurants in total," she said, "so 25 to 35 additional sites are available and we are sourcing sites actively for restaurants opening in 2013 and 2014."

The company expects to open 30 restaurants nationwide this year and 55 next year.

"Ohio has several markets that are wonderful growth markets for Rally's," Durham said.

Noyes declined to say where Rally's is targeting, but acknowledged he would expect the openings to begin in early 2013.

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