

Rally's planning to add up to 30 local restaurants

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September 7, 2011

The owner of the drive-through focused burger chain Rally's, which got its start in southern Indiana, hopes to double the number of locations in the Indianapolis area over the next 10 years.

Rally's has 30 locations in Indianapolis, 24 of them owned by the chain's privately held parent company, Tampa-based Checkers Drive-In Restaurants Inc.

Franchisees own the other six local restaurants and also would own most of the up to 30 new restaurants on the drawing board. The focus of the growth, a few new restaurants per year, will be in suburban areas, said Jennifer Durham, the chain's vice president of finance and chief development officer.

The newest location, at 5235 E. Southport Road, opened in August. The next one is under construction at 4905 Kentucky Ave.

"We think Indianapolis is a great market for the company," Durham said. "I think we can grow by two or three times and still have a nice presence without an over-saturation."

Among the local franchisees: Tim Amick, a local entrepreneur who also owns a landscaping company; and Fred Kaufman, a restaurant industry veteran who came out of retirement in 2009 to open his first Rally's.

The chain, which operates as Checkers in the Southeast and Northeast and Rally's in the Midwest and West, has 800 locations coast to coast and is aiming for 1,200.

The company is owned by New York-based private equity firm Wellspring Capital Management LLC and does not disclose financials, but Durham said results have been strong. Sales drivers include a new ice-cream product line featuring shakes and sundaes, and a late-night push (the chain now gets 21 percent of its sales after 10 p.m.).

The first Rally's opened in 1985 in Jeffersonville in southern Indiana. The chain merged with Checkers, which had been owned by the parent company of Hardee's, in 1999. Wellspring took the company private in 2006.

Rally's isn't the only burger chain planning an expansion here. The San Diego-based Jack in the Box chain, which also owns Qdoba Mexican Grill, has filed plans to open several new restaurants.

A new Jack in the Box location at U.S. 31 and County Line Road will be the chain's first restaurant in Indianapolis. Others are in the works for north of downtown, the Castleton area, on the east side and in Avon.