

## Looking for a bigger bite

New franchisees are part of Rally's plan to add 30 locations in Central Indiana

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Quick-serve restaurant veteran Fred Kaufman was bored with his golf retirement, and small-business owner Tim Amick is new to burgers and fries.

The two share a future as two of the newest franchise owners of Rally's drive-through eateries. Both opened new restaurants in Indianapolis in the past month.

They also could have key roles in Rally's corporate plan to add 30 locations in Central Indiana in the next few years. That effectively would double the number of Rally's here, and many will be owned by local franchisees such as Kaufman and Amick.

Tampa, Fla.-based Checkers Drive-In Restaurants, the parent corporation of about 800 locations of Rally's and Checkers nationwide, is working on a study of potential areas for growth and development, according to company executives.

And Indiana — where the first Rally's was opened in Jeffersonville in 1985 — remains prominent in the company's growth plans.

"Indianapolis has been a great market for the company, and we can grow by two or three times without becoming oversaturated," said Jennifer Durham, chief development officer and vice president of finance for Checkers.

Financial information about the privately owned company is not published, but in recessionary times, Rally's still has done well. Metro-area cus-



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Fred Kaufman (left) and Tim Amick each recently opened a Rally's restaurant in Indianapolis. Kaufman's is at 4905 Kentucky Ave., in a former Hardee's, and Amick's is at 5235 E. Southport Road.

tomers have been loyal to the Big Buford and other value-priced fare.

Company officials said Indianapolis has been a successful testing ground for menu items. New items on the menu are ice cream and frozen drinks, which were tested for six months in Indianapolis before being launched nationwide. They also help Rally's and Checkers compete with burger-and-fries rivals such as Wendy's and Hardee's.

"We have had a stellar performance during the past year, despite a very difficult economy," Durham said Thursday. "We attribute that to our amazing new products and phenomenal value that you just can't get anywhere else. Our food has always been uniquely different, and we strive to con-

tinue that promise to our guests."

Other nationally franchised, quick-service food chains have seen the same potential in Indianapolis and are trying to take a bigger bite out of the market.

McDonald's and Subway are opening new locations throughout the city and suburban communities. Sonic began three years ago to open its drive-ins around the metro area.

California-based Jack in the Box is coming to Central Indiana, with locations in Avon and on the Far Southside and Far Eastside.

In the Indianapolis metro area, Checkers and Rally's own 24 locations. The rest are owned by franchisees Paul Dilow in Shelbyville and Franklin; Joe Hertzman in Blooming-

### CHECKERS DRIVE-IN RESTAURANTS

» Tampa, Fla.-based Checkers Drive-In Restaurants is the parent of two burger-and-fries chains that merged in 1999: Rally's, with locations in the Midwest and West, and Checkers in the South and East.

» Wellspring Capital Management bought the public company in 2006 and took it private.

» Rally's was founded in Louisville, Ky. (The first restaurant, however, was opened in Jeffersonville.) Checkers began in Mobile, Ala.

» The company has about 800 restaurants in 26 states.

» More info: [www.checkers.com](http://www.checkers.com) and [www.rallys.com](http://www.rallys.com).

ton and Columbus; and Romie Sahi in Cicero.

Amick just opened a Rally's at 5235 E. Southport Road. The building includes two drive-through lanes and outside seating.

Amick, 51, owns a landscaping business. "But I've been looking for something new, and learned about Rally's from another franchise owner, who helped walk me through the process."

Kaufman, 65, owned 40 Burger King restaurants in Indiana, a business he built over a 25-year period until he sold it to the corporation several years ago.

"I tried golf and travel for a while but found I wanted something more to do, so I got back into the business with Rally's," he said.

He remodeled a former Hardee's at 4905 Kentucky Ave. and reopened with about 20 seats inside, a rarity for Rally's.

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