

Mt. Pleasant welcomes Rally's back

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Paul Amell has been swamped for more than a week, but he's more than happy about it.

Amell, who opened the new Rally's drive through in Mt. Pleasant Jan. 6, has been hands-on at the restaurant, knowing that first impressions are important.

Rally's is on Mission Street in the site that previously housed Hot & Now and Oh My Burgers and Fries.

So far, business has been steady and customers have been praising the restaurant, Amell said.

Amell, who owns other Rally's drive-throughs in the metropolitan Detroit area, was eager to bring the burger restaurant back to Mt. Pleasant.

A Rally's under different ownership operated in Mt. Pleasant about 10 years ago, and Amell believed customers wanted the chain back in town.

Touting "craveable" food, including a variety of burgers, fries, chicken sandwiches and other items, Rally's also features specialties, like the \$1.99 prime rib burger and the mushroom Swiss burger.

Rally's seasoned fries are also unique, Amell said.

"People just love it," he said. "They crave it.

"That's what sets us apart from our competition."

Customers have embraced the new Rally's and offered positive feedback, Amell said.

"It's a great community," he said. "We're glad to be here."

Jennifer Durham, chief development officer for Rally's and Checkers, said the response from customers in Mt. Pleasant has been great.

There were a few minor glitches when the restaurant opened, but Amell got them worked out, Durham said.

Rally's performance overall has been "fantastic," and Amell is a "phenomenal operator," Durham said.

Last year, Rally's was second only to McDonald's in the fast food burger industry, she said.

Amell focuses first and foremost on running a perfect operation and is one of the restaurant's top performers for 2011, she said.

Customers rate Amell's restaurants at 5 out of 5, she said.

When customers came back to the Mt. Pleasant restaurant, they were pleased with the additions to the menu, including a variety of flavors of wings, chicken sandwiches and the new "cold creations" desserts, Durham said.

Amell has established himself as someone who knows how to run the brand's business model, Durham said.

Checkers and Rally's drive-ins are the largest double drive-through restaurant chain in the United States.

The Tampa Bay-based company develops, owns and operates almost 800 Checkers and Rally's restaurants across the country.