

ONLINE COURSES HELP APPRENTICE PLUMBERS LEARN IN SPARE TIME

LI BUSINESS

PLUMBING from A31

Apprentices who obtain a journeyman card can earn more money and can work longer periods on the job without the presence of a licensed master plumber, said Pat Dolan, who is president of his company. In some cases they can apply locally for a limited plumber's license. In New York licenses are issued by local municipalities.

The state and national PHCC chapters keep track of the apprentices' progress through the program's four courses, each of which is equivalent to a year of instruction. Burns, who started the program about a month ago, was able to skip the first year after doing well on a placement test.

Previously apprentices had to hit the books in a classroom at a local community college or in the training facilities of a local plumbers' group, after toiling more than 10 hours at work. "The vast majority of apprentices . . . might not be able to go to school after working all day," Sheridan said.

Burns, who often works 50 to 60 hours a week, agrees.

"It's hard to work this job and go home and study," Burns said. He has worked for Pat Dolan Plumbing for nearly three years.

The certificates that apprentices can print out after completing the courses give them a leg up in job hunting, some plumbers said.

"A better candidate comes into my company rather than someone walking off the street," Esposito said.

Some said the e-learning program will ensure more staying power for young plumbers in the industry.

Long Island PHCC president Joseph Cornetta, of Cornetta Bros., an Elmont plumbing and heating company, said one of his employees will enroll in August.

"It benefits me as a business owner because now I have this young individual not only showing up for work every day, but he is learning, and I don't worry about losing him."

More information

Email Dorothy Reddy at dreddy@nysphcc.org for more details about enrolling in the e-Learning Apprenticeship Academy.

More smoothies coming



RETAIL ROUNDUP

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Smoothie King thinks Long Island will be a sweet spot.

Franchisee AB Smoothies LLC has signed a lease to open a second Smoothie King on Long Island — in Massapequa Park — in August, said Andrew Weinstein, co-owner of the franchise.

Weinstein and his business partner, Barry Edwards, own a 7-year-old Smoothie King in Carle Place. They plan to open about five more Long Island locations in the next five years, Weinstein said.

They also own four Smoothie King franchises in Florida and are buying 10 more existing stores in Atlanta, he said.

Dallas-based Smoothie King has more than 900 stores nationwide offering frozen beverages made with fruit, juice, nuts and/or vegetables.

"We love the brand, the cleaner blending initiative . . . It's a meal in a cup that tastes great and can be made in a hurry and keep you going," said Weinstein, a Syosset native who lives in Palm Beach, Florida.

The 1,000-square-foot Massapequa Park location, planned in a former Checkers at 5075 Sunrise Hwy., would have a double drive-through. The franchisees still need to apply for a building permit from the Town of Oyster Bay, Weinstein said.

Chris Ferencsik, an agent at Melville-based Schacker Realty, represented the Smoothie King franchise and the property sublessor, Brooklyn-based real estate firm J.W. Mays Inc., in the deal.

The local Smoothie King expansion is in line with the company's growth nationwide, as the chain plans to have 150 new stores in 2018 and it opened 96 last year, said Jamison Young, field marketing manager in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions.

There is no shortage of smoothie spots on Long Island — Tropical Smoothie Café has 18 local locations, and Jamba Juice, the biggest player in the industry, has seven on the Island — so it will be interesting to see how the competition shakes out.

I chatted with some restaurant experts about why the num-



Smoothie King plans to open a second Long Island location like this one, in Massapequa Park.

ber of drink spots is growing.

Last year Smoothie King's sales grew by 10.5 percent, said David Henkes, senior principal at Technomic Inc., a Chicago-based restaurant research firm.

"I think when you look at that category . . . Jamba Juice, Tropical Smoothie, Smoothie King — smoothies are very much on trend with what consumers are looking for. There is a perception of healthy," he said.

Smoothie shops are more popular with younger consumers, and their franchising can be less costly than other restaurants because they are smaller, so rent is cheaper, and they don't require cooking equipment, said Darren Tristano, CEO of CHD-Expert Americas, the Chicago office of a France-based restaurant research group.

Bedding boom

After opening its first store in Paramus, New Jersey, last month, Fortunoff Mattress is set to open three more on Long Island in July and August.

Leases have been signed for stores ranging from 2,400 to 5,600 square feet in Carle Place, at 214 Glen Cove Rd.; Huntington Station, at 277 Walt Whitman Rd.; and Massapequa Park, at 4934 Sunrise Hwy., according to Jericho-based Fortunoff Mattress.

A store also will open in Union, New Jersey, this summer.

You may remember the name Fortunoff from a former regional chain of family-owned stores that sold jewelry, furni-



Fortunoff Mattress has signed leases to open three LI stores.

ture and other home items.

Now Fortunoff Mattress is a new entity, under a license of Fortunoff Brands LLC, which also licenses the brand to Fortunoff Backyard Store and Fortunoff Fine Jewelry.

It made sense to add mattress stores to the enterprise, said Bernie Sensale, CEO of Fortunoff Mattress. "We saw a gap in the marketplace to provide a differentiated and upscale assortment of products and shopping experience," he said.

Founded in 1922, Westbury-based Fortunoff shut down in 2009 after filing for bankruptcy protection.

The Fortunoff and Mayrock families, who owned and operated Fortunoff for four generations, bought the intellectual property of Fortunoff, including the brand name and related trademarks, in 2009, according to the company.

Now the company plans to open more Fortunoff Mattress stores over the next five years in the metro area.

Eight to 10 will open in 2018 and 10 to 15 in 2019 if Fortunoff can find suitable locations and staff, and at least seven of those stores will be on Long Island, Sensale said.

Why the bedding boom?

Maybe because retail mattress sales are rising and shrinking. (Sorry, I had to do it.)

The customer base for mattresses has expanded since the recession officially ended in 2009, unemployment has declined and disposable income has increased, according to IBISWorld Inc., a market research firm in Los Angeles.

Furthermore, more shoppers are going to specialty stores for mattresses instead of general furniture stores — 19 percent in 1993 compared with 47 percent by the end of 2014.

Kmart job cuts

When Sears Holdings Corp. announced on May 31 it would close 63 Sears and Kmart stores nationwide in early September, it said the number of employees affected was not available.

The Hoffman Estates, Illinois-based retailer did not respond to my inquiry about how many workers would be laid off at the closing Kmart in West Babylon, or nationwide.

We now know that 85 employees will be laid off at the West Babylon store, courtesy of Sears' state-mandated filing of a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act notice.

The notice was posted on the state Department of Labor's website Wednesday but filed May 31, the same day the layoffs were announced.