

Daily Local News
May 25, 2005

Wanted: Bold clerks to serve cold treats

GRETCHEN METZ

GLEN MILLS -- Garnet Valley High School freshman Emily Moser recited the song "I'm a Little Teapot."

Andrew Agren, a sophomore at Unionville High School, acted a portion of a soliloquy from William Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

Jamie Vanderlaan, a freshman at Garnet Valley, told a riddle: When the rain comes down, what goes up? The answer: an umbrella.

They were auditioning, for sure, but not for a role in their school play.

On Monday night they made their pitch for a job at Cold Stone Creamery, a Scottsdale, Ariz.-based ice cream store chain where employees entertain customers as they scoop Chocolate Devotion or Banana Caramel Crunch on a waffle cone filled with French vanilla.

Seventeen-year-old Rahul Panda wants to work at Cold Stone because "it looks like so much fun."

"It would top my day off if I could work here," said Panda, a junior at Garnet Valley who sang "Heigh Ho, Heigh Ho" from "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."

About 15 teenagers "auditioned" for jobs at the Cold Stone in Glen Eagle Square on Route 202 in Glen Mills. The store is scheduled to open June 18.

Franchise owners Spencer and Sue Bank, of Boothwyn, Delaware County, are also looking for property to open stores in Media and Wilmington, Del., said Spencer Bank, who left a job at a credit card company to become a Cold Stone franchisee.

"The first time I was in a Cold Stone, I had two spoonfuls and picked up my cell phone and called my wife," he said.

He recalled telling her that he was eating amazing ice cream and wanted to open a franchise.

Outgoing employees are key at Cold Stone.

Not your ordinary scoop shop, the creamery will pull employees out from behind the counter to sing or tell jokes to keep customers entertained while they wait in line for service.

The idea to hold auditions to find employees capable of live entertainment came from a franchisee in Burbank, Calif.

"They have to show their stuff in front of a crowd," Bank said. "They have to get a laugh or a giggle, make a super experience for the customers. That's what we're looking for."

Auditions start with questions to the teens: If you were an animal, what would it be? Or, what is the yuckiest thing you've ever done?

That is followed by "bust a move," where the applicants tell a joke or dance. After that, they individually sing Cold Stone Creamery songs. Finally, applicants are separated into groups to choreograph one of the creamery's songs.

For the teens who had trouble remembering the words, after a week, "you'll be singing them in your sleep," Sue Bank said.

Each store employs 20 to 30 people. Monday night was the Banks' third round of auditions. They had 10 spots to fill.

Vanderlaan, 15, of Chester Heights, was back for a second audition.

"Last time I was nervous," he said. "This time I knew what I was doing. I wasn't nervous at all."

Agren, 17, of Chadds Ford, who wants to be an actor in New York City or Los Angeles, said doing Hamlet's soliloquy was something that "popped into my head."

The ice cream chain has more than 1,000 stores in 47 states and the Caribbean.

Donald and Susan Sutherland opened the first Cold Stone Creamery in Tempe, Ariz., in 1988. Every creation was then made-to-order for each customer by blending toppings with ice cream on a frozen, granite stone. The sweet treat was then served in a fresh-baked waffle cone.

In 1995, the first franchise store opened in Tucson, Ariz., followed by the first out-of-state store in Camarillo, Calif.

Customers can now order Cold Stone Originals like Coffee Lovers Only (coffee ice cream, roasted almonds, Heath bar and caramel) or Cocoa Banana Cabana (banana ice cream, yellow cake, banana, fudge and nondairy whipped topping). Customers may also have clerks mix up original concoctions.

Surprisingly, with all the options, Spencer Bank said simple French vanilla is still the top-selling flavor.